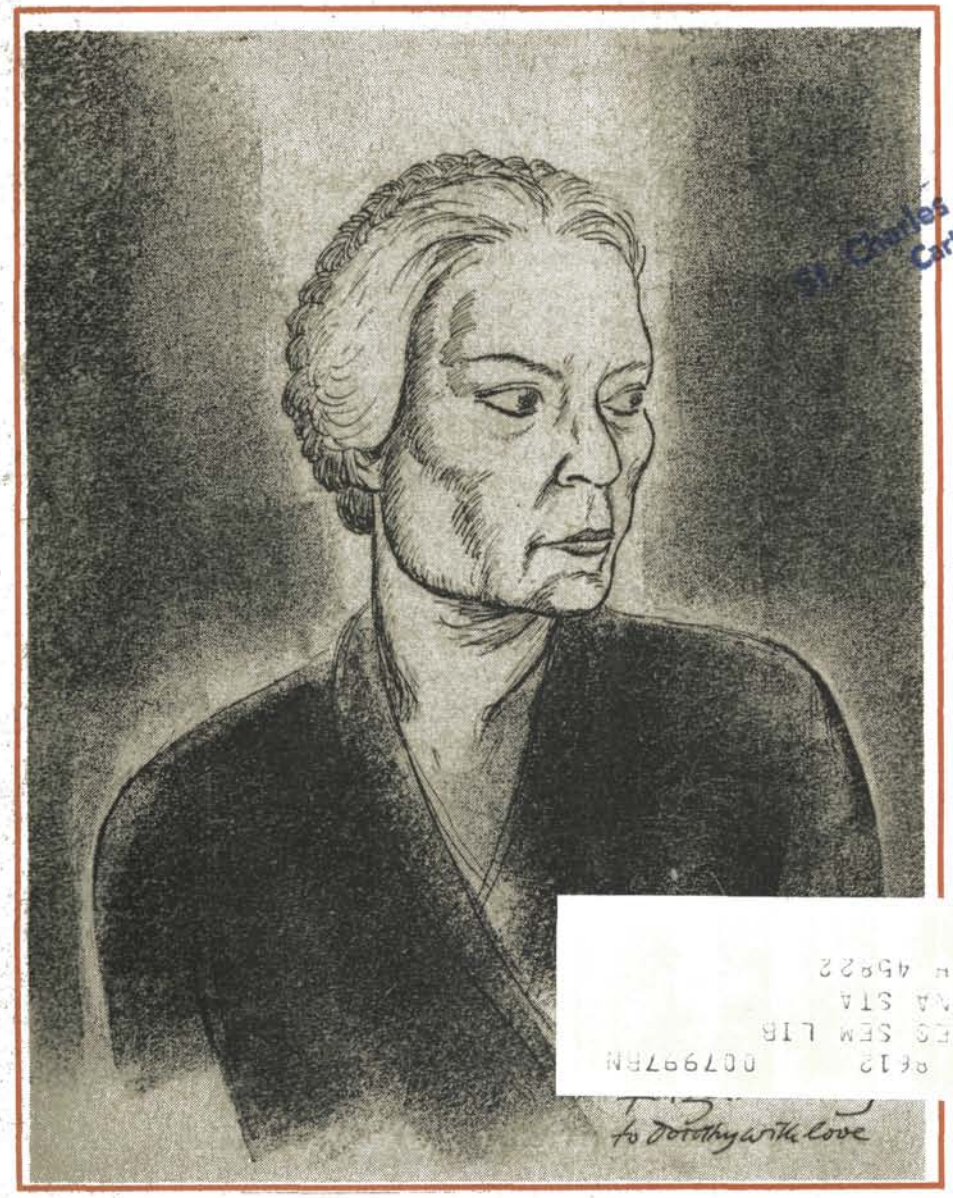
commonweal

Lucy Komisar
RECASTE-ING INDIA

Anne Porter
MY ANASTASIA

$1.25
NOVEMBER 29, 1985



St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthagena, Ohio

Dorothy Day: still a radical

PATRICK JORDAN

CHRISTMAS BOOKS
Critics' choices

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Correspondence

A big bellyache

Hollis, N.Y.

To the Editors: Fred Siegel's book review ["Wake Us When It's Over/The Quest for the Presidency 1984/On the Campaign Trail/Canarsie," September 6] comes in two parts. The first and much longer part is a sober attempt at political analysis wherein three books are commented on at some length. Oddly enough, Mr. Siegel pronounces a final judgment on them as "campaign ephemera."

The second part is not a review at all but a celebration of moral and intellectual qualities exemplified by white ethnics in Canarsie. This "ethnographic study" is supposed to supply us with the key to the sound Democratic defeat in the 1984 election.

But it is hard to see from what Mr. Siegel tells us about the book that it is a "study" at all. If we rely solely on what "The Autopsy of Your Choice" contains, Mr. Rieder's book is not "the most important book of the year" but a vehicle for the unexamined opinions of vocal Canarsie ethnics. This vehicle Mr. Siegel wants to elevate to the level of a standard, almost definitive book on the condition of blacks in America. He quotes with approval the "local parlance" that divides blacks into "parasites and producers." (The "parasites" are the black underclass and the "producers" are the black middle class.) The black underclass is beyond redemption — too far down to be reached by any kind of help, and eventually converting sensitive young white people into bigots.

After paying lip service to the existence of the black middle class and the deserving black family, he then tries to justify racial polarization in the Democratic party by appealing to so-called evidence unearthed in another study, the Stanley Greenberg Analysis Group in Michigan, which by his description was nothing more than a series of structured bellyaching sessions. According to these sessions, blacks were receiving "special privileges." Then he casually adds: "Greenberg subsequently discovered that in-depth polling around the country turned up similar results."

In other words, blacks are receiving "special privileges" on a massive scale.

Mr. Siegel's celebration of ethnic nobility is really an anti-black binge. What is it doing in the pages of *Commonweal*?

ROLAND LAIRD

Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters of not more than 250 or 300 words naturally have a better chance of being published.

The author replies:

Mr. Laird has misread my review essay. He's confused my point of view with those of discontented Democrats who voted Republican in 1984. I can understand his concern, the racial backlash which subtly underlies Reaganism is a deeply disturbing matter. But before it can be dealt with, it has to be understood. To that end I suggest he take the time and trouble to read *Canarsie*; it will repay his effort.

FRED SIEGEL

Not by bread alone

San Francisco, Calif.

To the Editors: Regarding Maurice R. Berube's article ["Assessing a Revolution," September 6], the record should be straight. The writing appears to be a glowing description of the successful accomplishments of the Castro regime. In perusing this article one tends to think that the Cuban people is blessed with this regime, and that the Cuban model is valid for addressing some of the problems of our neighbors across the Rio Grande.

However, the bottom line is that the writer is overlooking the basic reality of living in the Caribbean Marxist Paradise. Today Cuba is a totalitarian police state. It is run by a new breed of "caudillo" with Soviet backing of techniques and finances. Political liberties are nonexistent. There are no religious freedoms, no union freedoms, no freedom of travel, no individual rights.

Our Christian belief teaches us that "man shall not live by bread alone." Eradication of hunger, improving health care and literacy does not in any way balance the revolution's record.

MARINO LOPEZ BLANCO

Apples & oranges

Bronx, N.Y.

To the Editors: I have felt somewhat frustrated over the apparent inability of some academicians to deal accurately with statistical data. In some cases it is difficult to know for sure whether this is merely the result of sloppiness or the intentional desire to mislead the reader.

An example of this is a portion of Mr. Maurice Berube's article on Cuba ["Assessing a Revolution," September 6]. He states for instance that in Cuba ". . . nearly 27 percent of sixteen-year-olds drop out of school — a figure that still compares favorably with the 45 percent who drop out of school *after that age* in *urban high schools* in the United States." (My italics). He compares a group which includes intermediate school students in Cuba (junior high school students under the age of 16) with *urban* high school students in the U.S.A. (students aged 14 to 18) in a definite case of comparing apples with oranges. Mr. Berube forgets to mention that high school attendance in Cuba is *not* mandatory and is in fact selective by examination, while in the U.S. all students are forced to go to school until they either graduate or drop out. Had he opted to compare the drop-out rate of Cuban intermediate school pupils with U.S. intermediate school pupils the 27 percent drop-out rate for Cuba would seem very

(Continued on page 685)

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commonweal

NATIVITY & SENSITIVITY

ONCE AGAIN, we approach the season of Christ's birth, a time of peace, joy, and rancorous disputes between neighbors over the public display of Christmas crèches. In the spring of 1984 we editorialized on the Supreme Court decision allowing a municipal Christmas display including a Nativity scene. Not all of the Court's reasoning was persuasive, we wrote ["From Poland to Pawtucket," April 6, 1984], but the decision was welcome overall because it recognized concrete historical circumstances and refused to take a "rigid, absolutist view" of church-state separation. "In this," we wrote, "the Court has set itself firmly against that view which seems to demand an absolute scouring of all religious references from the public forum." The Court, it seemed, was drawing a line against that determined secularism which would ultimately put religion at a positive disadvantage in its public existence. The issue happened to be a municipal Christmas crèche. It could have been "In God We Trust" on our coins. It could have been — indeed, in an earlier case it was — the appointment of chaplains to state legislatures. It could have been the recognition of Christmas as a national holiday, the exemption of religious institutions as well as other charitable bodies from taxes, the study of religion in state universities. Taken individually, we said, none of these things may matter so much. Religion will survive, though society may be deprived. Taken as part of a pattern, however, they are worth defending. The issue, in other words, was not Nativity scenes. "Frankly, commercial Christmas displays complete with stable, oxen, and baby Jesus do not rank among our favorite things. . . . Christianity can stand without municipal Christmas crèches; and indeed Christians might better serve their own beliefs and their non-Christian neighbors' sensibilities by taking those life-sized figures off the public payroll and installing them on church property, minus the reindeer, clowns, and six-foot candy canes." That's still our view, one which seems worth underlining at this moment.

There has been a lot of discussion recently of the place of religion in American public life, some of it provoked by even more recent Supreme Court decisions on First Amendment matters. In this discussion, it is not always easy to chart a course by which religion is neither politicized nor privatized. With the government a nearly unavoidable presence in practically every dimension of life, an absolutist abhorrence of any contact between state and religion will work an unfair penalty on the latter. At the same time, religious faith should particularly welcome opportunities to be present in public without any governmental connection. Christmas crèches are an almost too easy example.

Every town has church property, often as centrally prominent as any municipal building or park. Let Christians willingly and reverently mark the birth of Jesus publicly, but on their own sites. Let them do this not because of a "wall" of separation between church and state, but because of a bond of sensitivity and respect

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between them and their non-Christian neighbors. Such a convenient resolution is not always available in these matters. Let us take advantage of it when we can.

One situation in which no such convenient path of resolution was available, it seems to us, was the federal program of remedial education for disadvantaged children that involved sending public-school teachers into parochial schools. The Supreme Court decision declaring this program unconstitutional, despite the strict procedures instituted to distance any publicly provided instruction from the schools' religious identities, was uncalled for, a hardship worked upon needy children in the name of rigid theory. Nonetheless, there is this to be said about the Court's decision: Just as the Pawtucket case may have signaled the Court's reaction to aggressive efforts to remove all religious symbols from the governmental sphere, no matter how peripheral their role, the latest decision may signal the Court's reaction to a rising clamor for state legitimation of religious belief, especially through the school system. "Th' supreme coort follows th' iliction returns." Mr. Dooley's point was that quite apart from the finer points of constitutional argument, the Court is affected by public opinion. That can happen in more ways than one, however; and most recently one might say that the Supreme Court has been trying to balance the election returns. If that is true, then the disadvantaged children who have been further disadvantaged by the Court's latest decision owe their plight not only to the dogmatists of absolute church-state separation, but also to the aggressive proponents of a "Christian America" and "bringing God back into the schools." Compared to that controversy, public Nativity scenes are, no doubt, a minor matter. They simply present Christians with an opportunity to demonstrate, by restraint and sensitivity, a different outlook.

FISCAL AUTOMATION

It was never a serious scare: President Reagan flying off to the Geneva summit meeting with the U.S. government embarrassingly in default, unable to meet the interest payments on its skyrocketing national deficit. Not surprisingly, Congress passed a stopgap bill; federal funds will be supplied until December 13. By then either the Senate's Gramm-Rudman-Hollings bill or the House revision of it (or some hybrid yet to be worked out) will need to be acted upon.

Both current bills would incrementally decrease the annual deficit so that the entire deficit theoretically would be eliminated by 1990-91. That is the good news. What is a serious scare, however, is that both bills provide for automatic across-the-board spending cuts (with certain protections in the House version) which would be effected by the president if Congress and the executive were unable to agree upon an annual budget within that year's ceiling. What's the fuss?

First, both bills ride on a debt-ceiling bill (increasing the 1986 debt ceiling to $2.1 trillion) which is subject to the same basic defect as its rider(s): namely, that to pronounce a debt ceiling, limits on the annual deficit, or percentage cuts in spending is a cheap substitute for responsibly determining which programs need funding, why, and to what extent. Both plans work backwards beginning with the ceiling rather than with a convincing delineation of national priorities.

Second, while both bills are clear about exemptions — Social Security, interest on the national debt, and existing military contracts — neither distinguishes which programs are actually subject to cuts; everything else, we presume.

Third, even given a precise slate of programs headed for the shearinghouse, what is fair or promising about a "flat cut" which would take the same percentage from school lunches, military salaries, and cancer research?

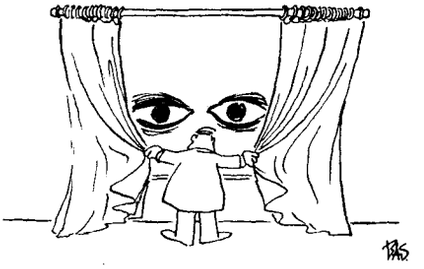
A compliant Congress opted for fiscal irresponsibility by accepting the president's tax cut and military buildup in 1981. Now, crusading against the resulting deficits, Congress refuses to combine all the obvious options — taxing Social Security and/or gasoline, initiating a progressive tax reform that also raises revenue, proposing a schedule of gradual farm subsidy reductions as part of a new farm bill, discreet cuts in military and social spending — and instead, substitutes reductionism for leadership.

REMOVE YOUR LENS

"We are here to tell you the truth," states the sober advertisement for a local TV news program. Not "all the truth" or "the whole truth"; but at least the direction is the right one. In a great portion of the earth, that sentiment is simply laughed out of court.

For years, South Africa has had over one hundred laws for governing the exercise of press freedom. But until November 2, foreign and domestic journalists had managed to report the disturbances rocking the country with surprising maneuverability. Following reports in October, however, of violence finally sweeping into white areas of Johannesburg and Cape Town, the government pulled the plug, particularly on photographers and journalists of the electronic variety. No person may now photograph, record, or even sketch what is happening without police permission. And reporters may face up to ten years in prison for doing so. It is the latest edition of the ancient story: "Messenger Blamed for Message."

It will not work. The messengers did not invent the report, even though the South African government has gone out of its way to suggest they did. The agony of South Africa will smolder until apartheid is removed. The flames may no longer be visible to proscribed long-distance lenses, but everyone who is not blind knows the heat is on. Even the government knows that both at home and abroad the news is not good. Unable to deny the fact, South Africa has again been forced to



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delay the repayment of its foreign debt. It has even ceased the production and sale of its alluring Krugerrands. For Pretoria to think the facts will simply fade away is to bemuse itself with slightly less than the truth. A simmering volcano eventually has its day.

ETC.

● Ian Paisley has threatened "an aftermath too horrible to contemplate." Enoch Powell has accused Margaret Thatcher of treachery. The IRA has declared: "too little, too late." Statements like that add up, in truth, to a sort of reverse endorsement of the agreement between Britain and the Irish Republic establishing an Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference to advise on Northern Ireland's political, legal, and social problems. The agreement is London's first official acknowledgment of Dublin's proper stake in the North. At the same time, the new body is only advisory, and the agreement states that the North's status cannot be altered except by majority consent. The agreement is a limited but path-breaking attempt to do justice to both the unionist and nationalist identities that divide the Northern Ireland population. The prompt denunciations come from those who see the other identity as constituting only a threat and not a right, from those who would trust to coercion and continuing violence rather than compromise. Their angry voices indicate how distant Northern Ireland remains from true justice and reconciliation. Those objectives, however, are just a little bit closer than before.

● All too often, important social research is not followed up with later studies, and when it is, all too often the follow-up findings don't get the attention of the original study. We plead guilty to missing a significant updating of an important report issued in 1972 by the Chicago-based Institute of Urban Life in cooperation with the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs. That report, which made its way into hundreds of articles, books, and government documents, had surveyed the directors and officers of over a hundred major Chicago corporations to see the extent of Italian-American, Polish-American, black-American, and Hispanic-American presence at high decision-making levels. *All* groups, as it turned out, had only a minuscule representation.

In 1983, the same researchers repeated the exercise, and published the results last year. The conclusion: "Poles, Italians, Hispanics, and blacks in 1983 continue to be virtually absent from upper echelons of Chicago's largest corporations." These four groups constitute almost half the Chicago-area population — but only 5 percent of these corporations' directors and officers. Blacks and Poles made some gains, but the numbers remain so small as to be derisory, e.g., there was a sevenfold increase in the number of blacks holding top corporate offices — from one individual to seven! Italians were slightly better represented to begin with, but have made no gains. Hispanics "in high-level, decision-making positions" remain "almost non-existent." These findings are now more than a year old. But it doesn't seem like things are changing very fast.

'Deciding who dun it'

UN-COLLARED CRIME

THE RIDDLE OF GUILTLESSNESS

RECENTLY we have heard a great deal about "the victimless crime." It seems we now have something even more remarkable — the criminal-less crime. A crime is committed, but no one did it.

In Washington, for example, a drug (Selacryn) marketed by SmithKline as a remedy for high blood pressure "has been linked to 36 deaths and more than 500 cases of kidney damage," according to the *New York Times*. The company has *pleaded guilty* to fourteen counts of failing to notify the FDA of adverse reactions to the drug, and twenty more counts of false labeling. The label had stated there was no cause-and-effect relationship between the drug and liver damage.

Startlingly, the courts have merely fined the company $100,000 and placed on probation three managers, who pleaded no contest to similar charges; they must also perform two hundred hours of community service. These were misdemeanor counts, not felonies. Had they been felonies, the managers could have served up to three years in prison and been personally fined $10,000 — on each count.

Why weren't they charged with felonies? Because "proof of intent" is required to prove a felony, and officials at the Justice Department said they weren't certain they could convince a jury of SmithKline's intent.

A SmithKline statement says, "The medical judgments relating to Selacryn were complex and made in good faith. There was no intentional wrongdoing." Yet before Selacryn was put on sale in the U.S., the company learned that the drug had probably caused serious liver ailments among patients in France. The Justice Department, according to the *Times*, claims that SmithKline "did not promptly disclose the reactions to the drug, as required by law."

Can you imagine any reason why a company should fail to report adverse reactions? You can? Strange — because the Justice Department can't. "If you're looking for intentional misconduct, there's got to be some motivation," says Patrick Korten of Justice. "Our conclusion was that there was not enough evidence."

If this sounds fishy to you, you are not alone. Says Howard M. Metzenbaum, the Ohio Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, "The Justice Department has let down the American people. Even though thirty-six people died due to corporate irresponsibility, the department let SmithKline off the hook. The Judiciary Committee will find out why."

The committee is also looking into similar cases of minimal Justice Department action in the cases of Eli Lilly & Company, another drug maker, and E.F. Hutton & Company, the big brokerage house. Hutton pleaded guilty not to twenty but to

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I want to make you the head of our new White Collar Crime Strike Force.
I'm honored, Mr. Meese.
Except I can't help but notice you haven't budgeted any money for prosecutions.
That's an idea we borrowed from our Civil Rights Division.
...voluntary compliance.

2,000 counts — of check-kiting fraud, in this case — and these were not misdemeanor charges, but felonies. Yet Ed Meese's Justice Department decided not to prosecute individual executives. The idea of personal responsibility is evidently passé. Responsibility is diffused into the corporation, and finally fades away into misdemeanors whose perpetrators must perform community service, as if they had been guilty of writing graffiti on subway walls.

In India, to cite another example, 2,000 people died of poison gases from a Union Carbide plant. *New York Times* investigators found that various company officers in India, asked who was responsible, pointed to officers above them, who set policy, or to others below them, who are responsible for day-to-day operations. Union Carbide's top officers in the U.S., including President Warren Anderson, refused to even discuss the matter with reporters, merely issuing a statement that any suggestion of blame was in the realm of speculation.

And we must concede that, in a sense, they are correct. A few days after the Bhopal disaster the *Times* editorialized that "in so extended a causal chain blame may prove harder to fix than at first appearances."

Exactly — "in so extended a causal chain." The problem is that in today's corporate structures the causal chain is always extended. One can easily understand how a Warren Anderson may find it difficult to identify himself as a culprit in so extended a chain — even though previous company officers point out that the U.S. office has complete authority to control technical operations in overseas plants.

And yet, 2,000 Indians did die, and thousands more suffered. And the disaster surely was preventable—the deadly methyl isocyanate was used in this manufacturing process only because it was cheaper. Somewhere along the line someone could have said, "Don't use this chemical, it's too dangerous, especially in an area so densely populated." Someone; some one person. No one did.

By contrast, when the Japanese 747 plane crashed in August killing 520 people, the largest number ever in a plane crash, there were no denials, no evasions. The president of Japan Air Lines did not wait for days of investigation to ascertain who was to blame. In accord with common Japanese business practice, he tendered his resignation the next day. He then proceeded to visit the homes of each of the victims' kin to apologize personally. Since there are hundreds of homes to visit, JAL's New York office tells me he is still in the process of making these apologies.

But Japan is an exception. Elsewhere the accusing finger usually rises to point, then hesitates, waggles, and drops. There's nobody there. Blame has been diffused into "an extended causal chain." Or else into nothing at all.

In France, the government denied responsibility for the Greenpeace bombing until newspaper probes made further denials impossible. Even then, the prime minister said he couldn't name names because, "It would be unacceptable to expose military personnel who were only obeying orders."

The buck no longer stops here. It doesn't even stop there. Seemingly it just keeps going, rocketing out of earthly orbit into space. Perhaps it is due to land, thousands of years in the future, on some distant star, where it will be incinerated into nonexistence.

But perhaps—just perhaps—one such buck will one day swing around the gravity field of a star, re-enter our atmosphere, and survive its descent to the planet's surface. And there it will be discovered by some obscure group whose notions of justice have not yet been thoroughly corrupted.

NIEL GLIXON

(Niel Glixon, a contributor to Dissent, Fellowship, *the* New York Times, Kenyon Review, *and* Prairie Schooner, *recently left Scholastic Magazines, after nineteen years, to work on a new type of English usage handbook.)*

Election '85

MODERATE VICTORIES

NEW FACES IN VIRGINIA

THE DEMOCRATIC sweep of three top state-wide races in Virginia offered quite a plateful for political pundits to digest: It derailed the assumption that realignment in the South is inevitable; it put the Republican party on notice that it cannot be assured of winning elections merely by running cookie-cutter campaigns about "family values" and accusing Democrats of being big spenders; the historic election of a black lieutenant governor and a woman attorney general showed that black and female Democrats can win state-wide elections if they appeal to a broad base; and, finally, it presented a new Democratic hero — outgoing Governor Charles "Chuck" Robb, Lyndon Johnson's son-in-law.

Robb headed a similar Democratic sweep in 1981 that ended twelve straight years of Republican rule in the Old Dominion.

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As governor, he has been "fiscally conservative" but moderate on social issues; he brought blacks, women, and liberals into state government while maintaining a steady hand and emphasizing popular issues like education. Robb is more popular in the state than Ronald Reagan, but under state law he could not succeed himself. He threw his support behind his attorney general, Gerald Baliles, an earnest, low-key moderate running against Republican moderate Wyatt Durette, whom he had defeated in the 1981 attorney general's race.

Baliles, forty-five, virtually ran as the incumbent. He also had excellent qualifications — he had been named outstanding attorney general in the country by his peers and picked as most effective state official in a Norfolk newspaper survey. Baliles accused Durette of trying to move the state backward — a reference to his support from ultraconservatives like former Governor Mills Godwin and former Senator Harry Byrd. It took courage to run in Virginia with the slogan, "New Ideas for a New Dominion." Durette's charges that Baliles was a big spender simply didn't wash. More importantly, the things that Baliles did want to spend money on — schools, roads, and economic development — were precisely the things that Virginians across the state wanted to spend money on.

Despite Durette's strong backing from Reagan, Baliles won with a comfortable 55 percent of the vote. But his victory almost took a back seat to that of his running mates. Douglas Wilder of Richmond, the grandson of a slave who in 1969 became the first black since Reconstruction to be elected to the state senate, became the first black elected to state-wide office in the South, winning 52 percent of the vote in his race for lieutenant governor against conservative John Chichester. And State Delegate Mary Sue Terry proved the biggest vote-getter of all, winning 61 percent of the vote in her race for attorney general against another conservative, Buster O-'Brien.

Unlike Jesse Jackson, who ran for president as a black candidate, Wilder, fifty-four, ran as a qualified candidate who happened to be black. His ads emphasized his experience — including the chairmanship of three top senate committees. He won the support of a leading conservative, House Speaker A.L. Philpott. Wilder — who once unsuccessfully tried to remove *Carry Me Back to Old Virginny* as the state song because of its reference to "Darkies" — ran as the candidate of all the people, making a two-month, 3,000-mile trip to every county in the state to introduce himself to voters. One of his TV ads featured a hefty, slow-talking deputy sheriff pointing out that the State Fraternal Order of Police endorsed Wilder. Wilder won 44 percent of the white vote; he carried seven of the state's ten congressional districts, including the almost all-white ninth district in the rural southwest; he won 53 percent of the vote in suburban Fairfax County.

Terry, thirty-eight, is generally regarded as a conservative. But on social issues, she was pro-ERA and pro-choice, although she had voted for a bill that would restrict access to abortion for teenagers. Terry had headed a 1982 task force for Robb that drafted a new drunk-driving law, and she used her reputation for being tough on drunk drivers as the cornerstone of her campaign. She proved herself a good campaigner — she drew laughs across the state saying that her home town of Crikes, Virginia, was so small the high school taught driver education and sex education in the same car. Terry was unharmed by O'Brien's implications that she wasn't qualified for office because she was single; she was helped by the fact that O'Brien had claimed to have played for the Washington Redskins, but the Redskins had denied it. Terry, like Baliles, carried all ten congressional districts.

The election leaves Virginia with a sense of being part of the "New South" and an administration with a mandate to continue successful past policies. It leaves the Democrats with Wilder and Terry poised to succeed Baliles, and with all three plus Robb ready to take on Senator Paul Trible in 1988. And it leaves the forty-five-year-old Robb right where he wants to be — in the national spotlight. Until now, stories abut Robb's national ambitions seemed a little far-fetched. Until now.

JIM CASTELLI

(Jim Castelli is a Washington-based free-lance writer specializing in religion and politics.)

In keeping with its usual holiday practice, *Commonweal* publishes one less issue at the end of the year. The next issue will be dated December 20, 1985.

Of several minds: *David R. Carlin, Jr.*

STAMP OF APPROVAL

LEGISLATING GAY RIGHTS

IN THE CORNER of the world in which I live and move and have my being, a nearby city council recently considered a gay rights ordinance, finally rejecting it by a single vote after much public controversy. The local Catholic bishop contributed to the controversy, opposing the ordinance on the grounds that it implied a moral endorsement of homosexual conduct.

The proposal provoked a popular local newspaper columnist to observe that it takes courage to be publicly supportive of gay rights. I suppose it does — at least if you live around the corner from the bishop and bump into him two or three times a week at the neighborhood milk store. But if you don't, I suspect it takes rather more courage to be publicly opposed to gay rights legislation. For to oppose is to create a *prima facie* case against yourself as intolerant and homophobic.

If you're intolerant of homosexuality, we begin to wonder how deep your

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commitment to democratic tolerance runs. If we scratch your otherwise liberal surface,' shall we find that deep down you're anti-black and anti-Semitic as well, not to mention your probable male chauvinism? And if you're homophobic, well, we all know what that means, don't we? Your hostility toward homosexuals is a displaced form of hostility toward your own repressed homosexual impulses.

The discovery of homophobia, whatever its merits from a psychological point of view, was a brilliant stroke politically. It effectively silences all public as well as much private opposition to homosexuality, except for that coming from the psychologically naive (who have no idea what hilarious things they're revealing about the secret regions of their psyches when they proclaim homosexual behavior to be "sick" or "immoral"), or from the professionally committed, such as Catholic bishops and Southern Baptist preachers. Threatened with a diagnosis of homophobia, cultured liberals, whatever their personal reservations, are little prepared to challenge the gay rights idea; just as, forty or fifty years ago, fellow travelers were little prepared to challenge Communism, whatever their personal reservations, when threatened with an analysis that showed their critique to be nothing but an apology for the capitalist-imperialist ruling class.

Since intolerant people generally deny they're intolerant (this is the "Some of my best friends are Jews" phenomenon) and homophobes *always* deny they're homophobic, obviously I can't get off the hook by declaring that my reservations about gay rights legislation are liberal-rational in motive. So I may as well confess right off to being an intolerant homophobe, even though that puts me in the unsavory company of Jerry Falwell, Cardinal O'Connor, St. Paul (who got positively rabid on the subject in the first chapter of Romans), and Dante (who, though somewhat reluctantly, it seems, put Brunetto Latini in hell).

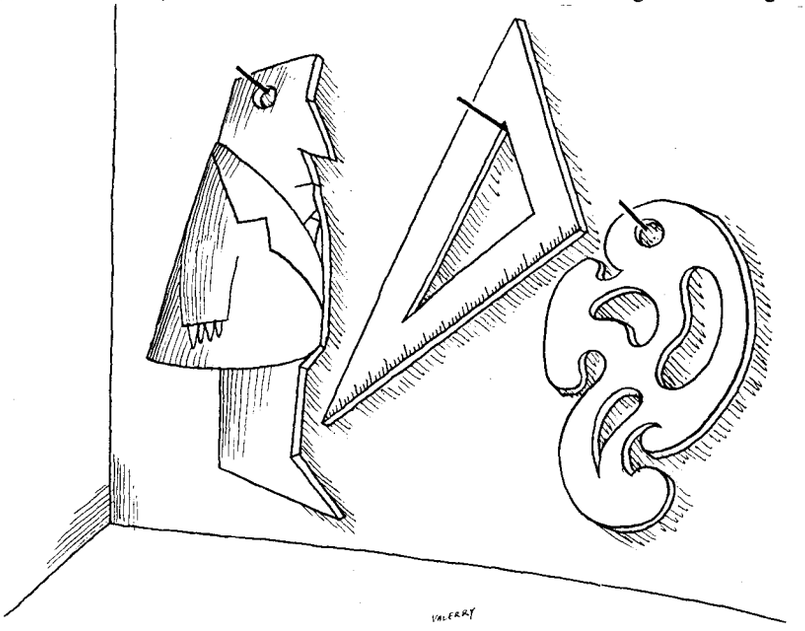
Our local bishop was right, I think: gay rights legislation really does constitute an official stamp of moral approval for homosexual conduct. There may be nothing in the statute that says this; but laws don't get passed in a social vacuum, and they take much of their public meaning from the social context in which they are enacted. The gay rights movement has pushed for gay rights legislation on the grounds that homosexual conduct is just as morally legitimate as is heterosexual conduct; it is neither "sick" nor "immoral" nor "unnatural"; and being prejudiced or discriminatory toward homosexuals is no more justifiable than being prejudiced or discriminatory toward Jews or blacks or women. Given this context, to enact gay rights legislation is tantamount to endorsing the rationale given for it.

What this means, among other things, is that we are telling those unregenerate members of the public who continue to hold that there is something immoral about homosexual conduct that there is something immoral about *them*; just as, during the 1960s, passing civil rights legislation was a way of telling unregenerate racists that their racism was immoral. Now, I realize I've disqualified myself as an authority on tolerance by virtue of my admissions above, but it nonetheless strikes me as intolerant to brand people as immoral because they continue to hold beliefs regarding the wrongness of homosexuality which had been held by their civilization from time out of mind. Ten or fifteen years ago, as a phase of the sexual revolution, the notion got around that homosexual conduct is morally okay; with the result that today, if a person is not sufficiently *au courant* and continues to believe that the pre-1970 *consensus gentium* on the subject may have contained more wisdom than the fashionable beliefs of the moment, he or she is to be stigmatized as a bigot. Some tolerance, this.

But there's another and even larger issue. The chief argument in favor of the moral permissibility of homosexual conduct is that this conduct inflicts no direct and tangible harm on anyone; and all conduct which is not directly and tangibly injurious is morally permissible. The trouble with this theory of morality, to put it briefly, is that it has precious little to do with morality. If there is such a thing as morality, then it is concerned with some or all of the following: the inner life, the quest for perfection, love of neighbor, the life of virtue, one's best self, the higher law, etc. If it has to do only with not injuring others in a direct and tangible manner, then there is no such thing as morality; instead "morality" is only a fancy name for the set of rules ensuring minimum social order.

Ultimately, I fear, the gay rights movement is promoting a theory of "morality" which undermines the very concept of morality — hence undermines all human rights, since these are grounded in morality. So even though some of my best friends are gay, mark me down as one who is extremely dubious about the merits of gay rights legislation.

DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.



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FIVE YEARS AFTER HER DEATH

Dorothy Day: still a radical

PATRICK JORDAN

THIS MONTH marks the fifth anniversary of the death of Dorothy Day. At the time of her passing (November 29, 1980), the historian David J. O'Brien wrote in these pages (December 19, 1980) that she was "the most significant, interesting, and influential person in the history of American Catholicism." Perhaps too expansive an appraisal, particularly in calculating her influence, and one O'Brien tempered later in his article. Yet the fact is that in the five years since her death, Dorothy Day has been mentioned as a possible candidate for canonization, she and the Catholic Worker movement have been cited in drafts of both the U.S. Catholic bishops' recent landmark pastoral letters on peace and the economy, and she and the Catholic Worker have been subjected to something of a publishing renaissance: the reissuing of two of Day's own books, the publication of her "selected writings," a major biographical effort, two fine studies of her social, religious, and journalistic significance, several children's books, a score of magazine articles, and a growing number of dissertations, scholarly convocations, and film documentaries.

As for Dorothy Day's newspaper, *The Catholic Worker*, O'Brien raised the question whether it could maintain its remarkable integrity and continuity without her presence. That remains to be seen, but in the time since 1980 it has generally done so. Its managing editors at the time of Day's death assumed the editorship, and while there has been some change on the editorial masthead, there has been surprisingly little for a movement characterized by its general fluidity. The paper's circulation has remained constant at slightly over a hundred thousand. One delightful change has occurred in the paper's makeup. On the fiftieth anniversary of the paper's logo (May 1985), artist Ade Bethune created a new one, updating her original version. Instead of two working men of different races united by the risen Jesus before his cross, the new logo pictures a migrant woman with child, a laboring man of differing race, and Christ joining them all. The number of Catholic Worker houses and farms is today more than seventy-five, perhaps the movement's all-time high. The various houses produce their own independent papers and newsletters, often of considerable vigor and quality, and are supported through generous individuals in their particular locales.

When Dorothy Day entered the Catholic church as a convert in 1927, she said it was because (among other things) she wanted to enter the church of the poor. It would be hard to characterize the Catholic church in the United States today in that fashion. One might be tempted to judge that just as the church has entered the mainstream of American society, so the notoriety that has come to Dorothy Day since her death has had the effect of temporizing and mollifying her prophetic life and vision. In 1972 Bill Moyers conducted an interview with Day for public television. He called it, "Still a Rebel." At seventy-five, Day radiated that. The film was an arresting presentation of her charm and bite. Five years after her death, it would be a mistake to mainstream Dorothy Day. As Ammon Hennacy wrote years before her death in his study of American radicalism, "Dorothy Day chose that difficult way of battling inside an autocratic and corrupt organization [the Catholic church] and by her life encouraging others to fight their battles in a peaceful way. She chose only pure weapons; and she stands as one of the most basic of radicals."

DOROTHY DAY saw her primary work as that of a writer. She hoped to find her books on bus station racks all across the country expounding the message of Peter Maurin and the Catholic Worker. She wrote with a point of view, and admitted to being didactic. (Her writing has come under criticism of late for being unstructured, discursive, of uneven quality, and according to one author, "the bulk of it is ephemeral.") Yet in all the recent studies that deal with Day (and the same will hold true here), the passages that invariably stand out for their notable insight, clarity, and grace are those from her hand.

Much has been made of the paradoxes in her life, and much should be. There was in it not a little of what Baron von Hügel

PATRICK JORDAN, *a former managing editor of* The Catholic Worker, *is an assistant editor of* Commonweal.

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called "that tenderness in austerity, and that austerity in tenderness, which is the very genius of Christianity." She seemed to have experienced nearly every human failure of the untamed life ("I see only too clearly how bad people are," she wrote. "It's my own sins that give me such clarity"), and yet she could revel that where sin once abounded, grace prevailed. Her writing was always related to her person. One would be hard put to suggest anyone whose purpose, deeds, and being were so completely integrated. When John Cort first met Day at a talk she was giving in Boston in 1936, he remarked at her "quality of humor and laughter that seemed to reach down to the secret, hidden places of the soul, promising at any moment to explain the mysteries of life and human striving." She preached the cross and suffering voluntarily undertaken for the sake of others ("The most effective action we can take is to try to conform our lives to the folly of the cross"). And yet, according to Cort and many others who met her, "This woman was getting a lot of fun out of life."

Hers was a quiet but commanding presence. She had a way of making you adjust to some purpose she had set out for herself. Two divergent examples: I remember being driven in her Volkswagen bug to the Tivoli Farm, about a hundred miles north of New York City on the Hudson. Dorothy was in her early seventies at the time, and by then was not a particularly skilled driver. (I have my doubts whether she ever was.) After a number of harrowing experiences that culminated in her nearly driving us under the body of a moving semi, she asked, "Would you like to say the rosary?" I was out of practice at the time, but it was easy to respond in the affirmative. The option has returned as an easy one many times since.

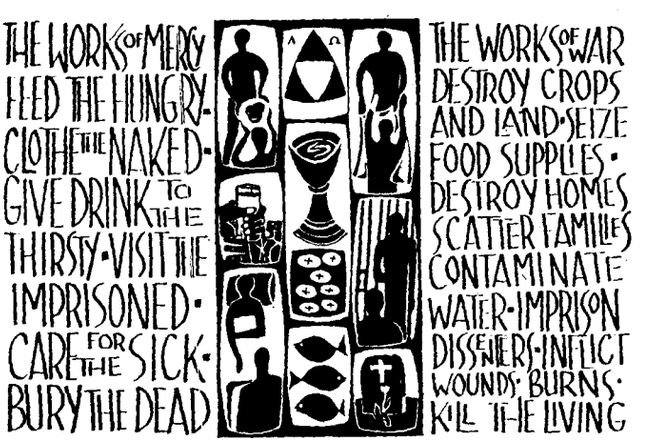
The second: She could be very indirect in answering a person's query for advice, but if you were listening hard, it was there. On the other hand, she could ask very direct and unsettling questions. While visiting the Soviet Union in 1971 she was invited to attend a gathering of the Soviet Writers Guild. When given the opportunity to present an observation, she asked those assembled why they had allowed Solzhenitsyn to be expelled from their group. The meeting broke up rather quickly thereafter.

It was this ability to get to the point that always left people a little uncomfortable with what might be coming next. I think it is best summed up in the first line of what are known as the Catholic Worker Positions: "The general aim of the Catholic Worker movement is to realize in the individual and in society the expressed and implied teachings of Christ." We don't hear many people taking that approach, talking that way, much less trying literally to live accordingly. Dorothy Day had a zest for such things, a great deal of common sense, and the desire and concern to discern what those "implied teachings of Christ" might be when it came to world events as well as the situation down the hall.

The understanding of human nature expounded by the Catholic Worker has its basis in Christian personalism. Both Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day were taken by the writings of Nicholas Berdyaev and Emmanuel Mounier, and both were influenced by the "anarchist prince," Peter Kropotkin. His *Mutual Aid* appeared in 1902. It was a scientific attempt to prove that cooperation among the members of a given species is as much a factor in survival and evolution as were Darwin's concepts of competition and the survival of the fittest. Kropotkin believed in the regeneration of human society through personal responsibility and the creation of cooperative, communitarian structures. He was influenced by closely observing such religious communities as the Dukhobors, which likewise had a deep effect on both Maurin and Day.

When it came to the great matters of war and peace, Day and *The Catholic Worker* took this cooperative insight about human nature and staked it to a divine revelation. Jesus Christ had gone well beyond mere natural ethics, and even beyond the precepts of the Old Dispensation in the matter of violence and war, teaching nonviolence by his very life. "People want peace," Day wrote, "but not the things that make for peace" — the daily, dedicated practice of the "works of mercy." Day listed these works in a 1949 article for *Commonweal*. "The Spiritual Works of Mercy are: to admonish the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead. The Corporal Works are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive, to harbor the harborless, to visit the sick, and to bury the dead." The artist Rita Corbin later contrasted the works of mercy and the works of war, effectively evoking the Catholic Worker's basic insight into the means of promoting and sustaining peace.

Day called nonviolence "a great ideal to be worked toward." She had no illusions that it was going to be easy to accomplish. In January 1942 she took *The Catholic Worker,* and those who cared to remain with her, into the anomalous and unpopular stance of opposing American participation in World War II. Christians who resorted to violence, she said, were like those who asked Jesus to come down from his cross. "Shall we ask him, with the unbelieving world, to come down from the cross? Or shall we joyfully . . . 'complete the sufferings of Christ'?" She implored her government and readers of *The Catholic Worker* to "permit us to continue to use our paper to 'preach Christ crucified.' " She said later, "We confess to being fools [for Christ], and wish that we were



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more so. . . . dear God, please enlarge our hearts to love each other, to love our neighbor, to love our enemy as well as our friend."

It was that last phrase that threw not only many national priorities and policies into question, but even the use of violence for those revolutions she supported and considered legitimate. Having spoken positively of the Cuban Revolution in the early 1960s, she wrote to clarify the matter of revolutionary violence in September 1962. "Several of our old editors have accused us of giving up our pacifism. What nonsense. We are unalterably opposed to armed resistance and armed revolt from the admittedly intolerable conditions all through Latin America as we ever were." Such a tenet is one present-day Christians, not to mention Catholic Workers, will have to continue to ponder, a very clear dividing line between absolute pacifism and other approaches.

Day reminded her readers of what Jesus said of his followers who wished to call down fire on the Samaritans: "You do not know of what spirit you are." She would point out to Catholic Americans that a nuclear deterrent policy which relies on the threat of annihilating others could only be considered unjustifiable. No doubt she would have found much to applaud in the 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*. But at the heart of it, she would have found its deterrent premise less than the Gospel truth. In whom, she would ask, do we place our trust?

MORE CHALLENGING yet is the Catholic Worker approach to economics. It is one based largely on a negative criticism of materialism in its present capitalist and Marxist formulations. While the Catholic Worker failed to develop a practical alternative of its own to these systems, the broad outlines for doing so have been present from the movement's inception. They rely on the English Distributists and a return to a rather uninviting medievalism. The Catholic Worker has championed the insights of such economists and historians as R.H. Tawney, Lewis Mumford, and E.F. Schumacher, and experiments in communitarian socialism, worker ownership, and cooperatives. Catholic Worker farms were meant to provide the productive economic element of the movement's program. For very good reasons these farms have become instead islands of refuge for the poor fleeing the alienation of industrialized society, asylums of hospitality on the land. Day wrote herself of these places: "As farmers, perhaps, we were ridiculous."

Yet there is a distinct usefulness to the Catholic Worker's espousal of an economics as if people mattered, one that employs Christian principles for determining the ends and means of production, and sets the goals of economic life. "The stink of the world's injustice and the world's indifference are all around us," wrote Day. The Catholic Worker was (is) a different economic school because it locates itself in the poorest pockets of society. From there, it has a very different perspective of Wall Street. "We cannot even see our brothers in need without first stripping ourselves," wrote Day. " 'The poor will always be with us.' But I am sure that God did not intend that there be so many poor. The class structure is of *our* making and by *our* consent, not His, and we must do what we can to change it. So we are urging revolutionary change."

Part of that change was to disavow a system based on money-lending at interest. The Catholic Worker maintained that the church's ancient tradition of condemning usury in all its guises should be dusted off and reinstated. Christian economics means producing and distributing what is adequate to meet society's legitimate needs. Surpluses are to help those who remain in need, not to enlarge one's acquisitive drives. The injunction of Saint Basil underlines the vision: "To the starving belongs the bread that you store away, to the naked belongs the cloak that you keep in your cupboard, to the barefoot the shoes that rot in your possession, to the needy the money that you bury away. So you commit as many injustices as there are people you could help."

Dorothy Day said that when it comes to economic matters, economists (and even prelates?) apply the candlelight of common sense where the flaming heat of the sun of justice was what is needed. "What is worst of all is *using* God and religion to bolster up our own greed, our attachment to property, and putting God and country on an equality." This led to the terrible injustices of the capitalist industrial system that lives by war and by preparation for war. Unlike William E. Simon who recently declared at Notre Dame that, "There isn't any contradiction between my Catholic faith, and the principles of American life . . .", Day would point out their very real disjunction: "We are un-American; We are Catholics," she editorialized in 1949. She was trying to teach that we live better when we know the real source of our daily bread. Such an understanding is more likely to occur where poverty is esteemed. "We want more than a weekly wage," she said. "We want God to teach us love."

While there would be much in the present draft of the bishops' economic pastoral that Day would support (the dignity of human labor, the emphasis on the common good, the right of workers to organize, the so-termed preferential option for the poor, the encouragement for cooperatives, and the letter's condemnation of materialism), there would remain fundamental disparities. The bishops do not, in Peter Maurin's phrase, blow the dynamite of the church. They settle for less than they should by lobbying for reform rather than urging the adoption of a fundamentally different economic entity, one based on a Christian social order, which would foster not merely a well-satisfied acquisitive society, but a holy people. The pastoral fails to encourage a "disposition toward poverty," one that would allow the church to think and act in radically different terms about its own investments and our militarized economy. In Maurin's stark language, today "Nobody drives the money lenders from the temple because the money lenders have the mortgage on the temple." Such a disposition toward radical trust in God, the sharing of goods, and the simplification of needs would offer support to families and communities trying to live the fullest aspects of the Gospel.

Because of her great love of the church, Dorothy Day always felt the freedom and responsibility to criticize it. She frequently quoted Romano Guardini: "The church is the cross

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on which Christ was crucified; one could not separate Christ from his cross, and one must live in a state of permanent dissatisfaction with the church." This two-edged sword is a source of consternation to those who see sin and injustice in the church itself. I remember hearing a particularly pitiful sermon from a monsignor, one of those performances that leaves you nauseated and angry, a not uncommon experience for most churchgoers. Dorothy's only comment on the way home was, "If the church can survive priests like that, it just goes to prove God must be with it." She used every experience, negative as well as positive, to foster her belief. Faith, hope, love are acts of the will: "Every act of faith increases your faith," she said.

Her repeated admonition was: pray and endure. She wished to induce others to daily Mass, Scripture reading, and the practice of the presence of God. "Prayer is the answer. It is the clasp of the hand, the joy and keen delight of the consciousness of that Other. Indeed, it is like falling in love." To those with whom she worked, she was constantly giving prayerbooks, psalters, the Scriptures, C.S. Lewis's *Reflections on the Psalms,* or Charles de Foucauld's *Spiritual Autobiography*. She said that going on retreat was the hardest work one could do. I recall her looking forward to one to which the Quaker elder Douglas Steere had invited her. The luxury of a weekend of prayer and reflection! When she returned home on Sunday night she looked exhausted. She was. Steere had divided the large group of retreatants and assigned half of them to Dorothy for spiritual direction. She had spent the weekend listening to and advising others. She never again accepted one of Steere's invitations.

When it came to being a woman in the church, Day likened herself to John Wesley's wife who was occasionally allowed to preach. Day held in honor those who had advanced the place of women, once inscribing a book to Sister Luke Tobin by simply thanking her "for all you have done for women." She saw change in the church coming generally not from theological reformulations, but from groups of people living differently.

Some have said that Day offered little vision for democratizing the church. In one sense this is quite true. Yet in another it widely misses the mark. As an anarchist (she never voted, and did not have a social security number), Day had little truck in assenting to majority rule. What she wanted to promote was personal responsibility, both in the church and in society.

Sally Cunneen (*Cross Currents,* Fall 1984), tells of an incident that underscores Day's relation to the women's movement.

> It is ironic that Dorothy and the women's movement passed each other by. One reason may have been Dorothy's anecdotal way of talking . . . I heard her speak on a panel at a large conference on women's liberation and the church in the early '70s. She told of the organized life at the Worker, saying that the cook was the only authority there. The audience seemed not to know what to make of this story and passed it by with polite applause and no response.
>
> Hoping to hear Dorothy's dry, ironic voice, I replayed the tapes of that conference and found that her story had been removed. Yet it had been the only thing I remembered. It seemed to me a parable for women, telling us we must not needlessly confront authority, for it is sometimes useful — particularly in feeding people. The primary creative responsibility for any change, Dorothy implied, lay in our own hands.

When it came to matters of sexuality and changing the church's teaching, Day was reticent but adamant. She would quote a Portuguese proverb in this regard: "Do whatever you want, but pay." "For me, Christ was not to be bought for thirty pieces of silver, but with my heart's blood. We buy not cheap in this market." She called it heroic virtue in the life of a family to welcome each child as from the hand of God, to practice continence or celibacy within marriage. "The teaching of the church in regard to marriage and its indissolubility demands over and over again heroic sanctity."

On matters of lesbianism and homosexuality, she said she stood with Saint Paul. She was derided for this, and felt the wounds of rejection from those within her own household. Her advice: If we are not being persecuted for our beliefs and life, there is something wrong with us: "May the Lord direct our hearts and bodies in the love of God and the patience of Christ" (2 Thess. 3:5).

AS IT SOMETIMES happened, in opposing the institutional church Dorothy seemed relegated to the fringe. Yet history and theology have generally vindicated her. There is a common misunderstanding that holds if Cardinal Spellman had told Day to shut down *The Catholic Worker,* she would have. After all, she literally said so herself. On the other hand, she made it clear to those who shared the work that she never seriously entertained the possibility. She believed Spellman was too American to do such a thing, and she was right. Had it actually happened, she believed someone else would have carried on the work, either by not paying attention to the cardinal, or by moving across the river to a different diocese.

Dorothy Day was so steeped in the lives of the saints that she had no fear of unsettling clerical sensibilities. She never betrayed her composure. In 1935 when the Child Labor Amendment was short eight states for passage, most of the Catholic hierarchy and the diocesan press were arrayed against its adoption. According to social historial Mel Piehl, "Only a few liberal bishops, social reformers, and liberal publications like *Commonweal* and *The Catholic Worker* stood against the tide." Monsignor Patrick Scanlan, the New York archdioce-

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san censor, told Father Joseph McSorley, Day's confessor and advisor to *The Catholic Worker*, to have her tone down the paper's support for the amendment. Day protested that the issue was not one of dogma. "The stand we take is also the stand taken by Monsignor John Ryan," she pointed out. "It is, after all, a matter of opinion." Today we refer to such incidents as the application of prudential judgments; some church officials continue to confuse the process with dogma.

But the chief gift of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker, to both the church and society, was the creation of a community from which it is practically impossible to be expelled. Many have left the Worker, it is true, for ideological reasons, and many more because they couldn't stand its failures. Those living in its houses and farms have sometimes worn out their welcome because of violent acts, sexual misconduct, or substance abuse. But the guiding leitmotif of the Catholic Worker movement has consistently been the parable of the wheat and the weeds. No one really knows until the final judgment which is which. The sinner will always be welcomed back, seventy times seven. After all, we are all members or potential members of Christ's Body. What a remarkable realization of freedom this grants. No one can be separated from the love of Christ, neither by principalities nor powers, by church or state.

It is five years since the death of Dorothy Day. The church on Staten Island where she was baptized burned down several months ago. The beaches where she used to walk so freely are now being converted into millionaires' enclaves. The Catholic Worker remains on the margins of church and society, precisely where it should be. And Dorothy Day's message is as radical and prophetic as when she expressed it herself. She died on the Saturday evening before Advent. She and her message remain there, awaiting the season of expectation.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN INDIA

Recaste-ing a fated past

LUCY KOMISAR

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, which has caused great controversy in the United States, has this year provoked riots and violence in India that have left more than two hundred dead, hundreds more injured, and 10,000 homeless. Students and workers of the middle and upper castes have taken to the streets to protest state laws that set quotas and provide preferential treatment for lower castes in government jobs and professional schools. The situation inevitably calls forth comparisons with the affirmative action program for minorities and women in the United States. It also poses questions about whether such tactics can be used to raise the underprivileged masses in developing countries.

The problem in India is both similar and different from that of the United States. As with minorities and women, lower castes in India have been looked on as intrinsically inferior. However, the magnitude of the problem — there are 100 million Untouchables living in a feudal economy — creates huge differences of scale and problems of integration into the society. Caste in India is technically a matter of social and not economic class, but the lower castes are generally also economically deprived, and critics say the caste system was instituted to give religious sanction to economic inequalities. The Hindu religion teaches that one's status in life is preordained by good or bad acts committed in a past incarnation.

Hindus are divided into four major castes and dozens of subcastes, with the Brahmins at the top and the Untouchables at the bottom, divisions that for centuries determined what jobs people could hold, whom they would marry, where they would live. Untouchables could not go to school or hold other than menial positions. They were banned from entering Hindu temples or taking water from village wells. To touch them was to be polluted, and Brahmins would wash if an Untouchable's shadow fell on them.

After India became independent in 1947, Mahatma Gandhi and others pressed for a national commitment to uplift the Untouchables whom he named "Harijans," the children of God. The national constitution established a commitment of preferential treatment for Untouchables, who are 16 percent of the population, and also for tribals, non-Hindus who were isolated and left out of national development and are 8 percent of the population.

That commitment was translated into a quota system in the federal and state parliaments, in higher education, and in government jobs. Student beneficiaries got scholarships, free books, free meals, and lodging. Some of the states extended the benefits to what the Indians call "other backward castes," low caste groups above the Untouchables.

Caste tensions and conflicts have long been part of Indian society. They have increased in recent years as the lower castes became economic and political competitors of those who had traditionally been privileged. Now, in an economy of short-

LUCY KOMISAR *is a freelance journalist who writes about foreign affairs. She has recently returned from six weeks spent in India.*

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ages where there are not enough jobs or school places, the conflict has exploded.

In spite of resentments, and though the Untouchables have been the targets of caste violence over land and other economic issues, there has been a general consensus that the country should do something for them and the tribals. (The government calls them scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, a reference to the commitment to them specified in the constitution.) However, the move by some states to give preferences to the so-called "backward castes," has unleashed the anger and violence of those higher up in the hierarchy who see their own privileges slipping away. They also see such benefits as politically motivated in a society where voting is done on caste lines. Some states have classified as many as 72 percent of the population as backward, though the courts have ruled that more than 50 percent of posts cannot be reserved.

The latest riots started in February in the state of Gujarat on the west coast of India between Bombay and Delhi. The state government, in a ploy to gain votes in the March local elections, had raised the quota for backward castes in medical and engineering schools and government jobs from 10 to 28 percent. Added to the places reserved for Untouchables and tribals, that made a quota of 49 percent.

Students, teachers, and government employees took to the streets. Buses were set ablaze, police were pelted with stones, strikes closed schools, shops and markets shut — some out of solidarity, some out of fear — mobs ranged through the towns stabbing and looting, and 30,000 rioters set fire to a slum colony. After police joined the rioters, the army was called in. By the end of three months, 70 people had been killed.

In the nearby state of Madhya Pradesh, last November the state government had increased the quotas for backward castes in professional schools from 30 to 55 percent, and had also decided to give them 25 percent of government jobs. The disorders spread there, including the ill-fated city of Bhopal where more than two hundred anti-reservation protesters were injured when police charged their demonstration.

THESE EVENTS are forcing people to take a hard look at the reservation system, and many liberals who are sympathetic to the idea of affirmative action say it has been improperly thought out and that it has gone too far. Many say simply that it should be restricted to the Untouchables and tribals. The *Hindustan Times* editorialized in February that "in extending the reservation system to the backward classes, both the state administrations, not exactly known for their pro-poor inclinations, have practiced the old and venerable caste politics." It said the results would be dangerous. "To reserve just about half the seats in an educational institution without much public debate invites a backlash, especially in a society of scarcity where violence has become the only medium of dialogue."

The Untouchables and tribals never presented a real threat to those in power. In fact, a study several years ago showed that since the policy began in Gujarat, scheduled castes and tribes had taken only 37 of 857 reserved seats in medical colleges because they lacked qualified candidates. Job and university quotas for Untouchables and tribals there and elsewhere have gone unfilled for years because programs don't provide the remedial training that would prepare the disadvantaged for the reserved places.

But the upper castes, who had acquiesced to reservations for the Untouchables and tribals, began to fear that the "backward castes" — in effect middle castes who have increasing political influence and decide the fate of the governments in the northern Indian belt — were pushing them out of their advantageous positions.

The *Hindustan Times* observed, "The real danger in such reservation for the backward classes is that the upper castes would exploit its obvious unfairness to attack the very principle of reservation for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes." That is indeed happening. Many people now argue that giving places on quotas that ignore merit will bring down the level of government and the professions. Others, more concerned with the situation of the deprived, say the programs just don't work.

Andre Beteille, head of the sociology department of the Delhi School of Economics, has argued that the quotas for parliament and state assemblies make sense because those representatives are supposed to speak for their constituencies. However, writing in *Seminar* magazine, he pointed out that the reservations for jobs are so few in comparison to the eligible populations that they can't have any effect on moving large numbers of people out of poverty. "Job reservation has diverted attention from the masses of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who are too poor and lowly to be candidates." It has attended to the middle classes of those groups as a way of buying temporary peace.

The real need, Beteille has written, is for mass literacy and primary education (only 20 percent of Untouchable children are literate), but that it was doubtless cheaper to provide higher education to a selected few. He has raised the question whether reservations, instead of integrating the Untouchables into society, are having the opposite effect by hardening and perpetuating their identities. The only sure area of gain has been for those political parties which gained votes by promulgating the rules. Much of the resentment which has resulted in the populace is from the perception that the rewards of the present system go to the elites, the headmen of the communities who deliver the votes, and not the impoverished masses. Arun Shourie, general secretary of the Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, has said, "The more advantaged hog all the benefits."

Many of the beneficiaries are the children of men with good positions in government. Others are political leaders who trade their control of votes for lucrative advantages. Once they move into the world of the upper castes, they forget those they left behind at the same time that they have a vested interest in perpetuating the division in society. Shourie said the groups are manipulated by leaders who fan their grievances in order to blackmail the politicians seeking their votes. The system is rife with corruption.

Government officials acknowledge there are abuses. A gov-

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ernment spokesman said that high caste Brahmins had even gotten their children adopted by Untouchables to get them into medical school. Some people have obtained false certificates to get benefits.

One solution to the problem is to change the standards for affirmative action. "Why can't there be a balanced approach taking into consideration merit as well as the economic aspect?" said Inder Mohan, another leader of the civil liberties union, who works on behalf of exploited laborers. "There are Brahmins who are as poor as Harijans." He noted that Muslims and Christians don't benefit from the reservations at all. Shourie said the government should increase scholarships and extra coaching for disadvantaged groups but should phase down the reservations. "We must replace caste as the criterion for determination by economic criteria."

But the government argues that the measures are necessary. A government spokesman, who declined to be quoted by name, said, "A large number of people who have been promoted are not suitable for their jobs, but they have got to be promoted under the constitution and law. It has affected the government very badly," he said, "but you have to decide on balance what is good."

"One has got to accept the situation that a certain number of people have to move up so at least their children can have a better start," he explained. "You can't make progress if such large numbers of people remain backward, so they have to be given incentives; and you have to pay the price for it. In time, they will make their contributions."

Nirmal Mukarji, professor at the Center for Policy Research, even argues in favor of the creation of an Untouchable elite. He wrote, "The emergence of such an elite is indeed the main objective of reservation policy, the expectation being that this very group would strengthen and give hope to the weaker sections it has sprung from and would also make a dent in the exclusive attitudes of the rest of society." He said that cooption of this elite would pave the way for greater integration. Devaraj Urs, former chief minister of the state of Karnataka, argues that, "It is only when government personnel are drawn from the backward classes that there will be effective implementation of socio-economic programs."

And there have been some real benefits. Beteille remarked in an interview, "On the whole, it has made a difference to the Untouchable's image of himself and the public image of them." Some Untouchables have moved up the economic ladder. Although most of them are in lower level jobs, a few hold important positions in civil service and government, including that of cabinet minister. Still, the rate of literacy and socio-economic progress of the Untouchables and tribals lags behind the rest of the nation. They still go to inferior schools and, when they reach university, they are looked down on by the other students.

Some critics fear that affirmative action will have dangerous consequences. Shourie said, "People have acquired a vested interest in proclaiming themselves as backward. This is creating a backlash among caste Hindus which will lead to divisions in the future." He said it would spread from the states to be a national issue "because people who had advantages over the centuries are now the dispossessed."

Inder K. Gujral, a former minister now in the opposition, predicted that the politically motivated approach in increasing reservations would only lead to further serious problems in a sub-continent already teeming with them.

Screen

TALES OF TWO FAMILIES

THE OFFICIAL (& UNOFFICIAL) STORY

THE OFFICIAL STORY is a film about complicity and conscience. It stars Norma Aleandro (co-winner of this year's Best Actress award at Cannes) as an Argentine mother caught in the aftermath of the time of the *"desaparecidos"* — the "disappeared ones" who vanished without a trace after having been abducted, tortured, and killed by paramilitary police during the brutal military dictatorship of the late 1970s.

The brilliance of the film, directed by Luis Puenzo, rests on a peculiar twist of plot. Aleandro is not the mother of one of the *desaparecidos*; rather, she is the adoptive mother of one of the infants of the missing ones. *The Official Story* is thus a social protest film, but its focus is deflected from a simple contrast of good and evil, or victim and villain, to a more complicated drama of a good woman and a corrupt society whose villainy has benefited her. *The Official Story* manages to be both highly moral and moving, all the more so because it courts moral ambiguity and avoids propaganda.

Aleandro plays a history teacher; nonetheless she is convincingly presented as an innocent who knows little about Argentine politics and nothing about the "disappeared." The film opens with shots of her attending a funeral service for those killed in the Falklands (or Malvinas) war in 1982, just when the military dictatorship began to collapse and dark truths about its misdeeds began to be examined. *The Official Story* recounts Aleandro's gradual awakening to the secret of her adoptive motherhood as a symbol of her society's awakening to its secret crimes. Director Puenzo thus manages to ride that old warhorse, the parallel between micro- and macrocosm, without the pretentious intellectuality that plagues many foreign filmmakers. His principal medium is Aleandro's face, a perfect registry of sensitivity, suspicion, pain, and finally exhilaration as she pursues her quest for the truth.

Aleandro is married to a rich businessman (Hector Alterio), who, during the dictatorship, urged her to adopt a baby when they discovered that she was infertile. The early sequences of the film document the extraordinary tenderness of this family, particularly the love of both adoptive parents for their child, Gaby, now five-years-old and a charming elf (Analia Castro). Aleandro is happy with her life and her job, despite students

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who protest her textbook approach to the past and tell her, "history is written by the assassins." In general, she leads a comfortable and gracious upper-middle-class life, one given its own nobility by familial love.

A high-school reunion, however, unsettles her: her best friend returns from mysterious exile abroad, and after some happy reminiscences, starts telling Aleandro of her earlier arrest, torture, and flight. The scene is perfect: one moment laughing, the friend is crying the next; true to her sanguine character, it takes Aleandro a minute to catch up and really understand what she is hearing. Indeed, when she learns from her friend that children of the *desaparecidos* were put on the adoption market, she recoils in horror and, in effect, throws her friend out.

Nevertheless, the rest of the film details how Aleandro cannot resist investigating Gaby's origins; the moral seed, once planted, proves too hardy to be buried beneath complacency. Despite her husband's warnings not to probe, Aleandro researches adoption and hospital records, eventually arousing the interest of one of the mothers of some *desaparecidos*. In a magnificent scene in a cafe, the mother finally shows her a picture of *her* missing daughter, a young woman abducted after marriage and during her first pregnancy. Aleandro's intense shaking fit here seems no contrived mannerism, but a genuine incarnation of maternal anxiety cross-checked by guilt. When she finally has the courage to look at the picture, she sees Gaby's spitting image.

The Official Story is structured to result in a suspenseful climax: what will happen when Aleandro confronts her husband with her discoveries (which eventually also include his involvement with paramilitary police)? The suspense would be shallow, however, if the husband were rotten. But director Puenzo makes him a partially sympathetic figure, certainly no cardboard villain. His love for his wife and daughter are unquestionable. We also see him in a classic family fight with his brother and father, an argument over politics in which he preaches the gospel of progress with conviction and passion; his defect, Puenzo implies, lies less in such beliefs than in his singlemindedness and rabid anti-Communism. At the end, even his brutality is softened, or at least placed in context, by some final, futile gestures of affection.

The only flaw in Puenzo's directing results from the fact that, in the husband's case, the micro-/macrocosm parallel doesn't work. Alterio's increasing financial difficulties seem too neatly contrived to serve the purpose of the plot, and his fuzzy references to domestic politics, significant to an Argentine perhaps, are confusing to an outsider.

But this is trivial. *The Official Story* is superb. With its excellent plot, acting, and directing goes a camera which captures, like an emotional seismograph, the inner conflicts that ravage the principal actors. Nothing is falsely shot or theatrically staged, not the evasions of the husband, nor Aleandro's need to know and horror of knowing, nor the understated grief of the second mother. When Aleandro rejects her husband's cajoling embrace before the final blow-up, there is no trace of the staginess that marks most domestic quarrels in film. The final embrace and phone call, are a cinematic event — this year -- of unrivaled beauty, horror, and pity.

The Official Story has become the highest grossing film in Argentine history, satisfying that newly democratized country's craving for truth about the "disappeared." But as art, not politics, it also happens to be one of the best films of any kind of 1985.

WHEN FATHER WAS AWAY ON BUSINESS, another family tale, should have been a half-hour shorter. A wryly amusing memoir turns boring when Yugoslavian director Emir Kustirica attempts to encompass too much and starts hitting repetitive notes in his familial tangle. Based on a story by Bosnian poet Adbulah Sidran, the film concerns a Sarajevo family whose father is arrested and sent to the labor camp during the early years of the Tito regime. Since the father was arrested for mild criticism of a propaganda cartoon, the family euphemistically refers to his exile as a trip "away on business." Seen through the eyes of his seven-year-old son, Malik, the strength of the film is the humor and charm family members display in order to endure.

Most of the attention is focused on father and son, who have a relationship one-part banter and one-part reverence. The most interesting member of the family, however, is the mother, Sena (Mirjana Karanovic). She holds her family together during hard times, fights for her husband's release, and then endures his inconsistent loyalty; although he loves her, he also has an insatiable taste for philandering. Sena deserves better but rarely gets it. Malik sleepwalks, and accordingly has a bell tied to his feet at night. When he accompanies his mother on a visit to the labor camp, he mischeviously (and Oedipally) rings the bell to disturb his parents' few moments of reunited bliss. The dutiful Sena goes to lullaby her son to sleep, only to return to a snoring husband.

Watching her preside over family gatherings, however, is the most enjoyable, warmest, and least slapstick part of *When Father Was Away on Business*. Kustirica's directing and camera work catch her slight, somewhat strange Slavic beauty as well as her kind graciousness. Intentionally or not, Kustirica has made Sena into a Balkan Ceres. When she becomes less important to the narrative towards the end of the film, it falters.

TOM O'BRIEN

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Anne Porter

My Anastasia

1.

My mother ironed all day
Tomorrow will be Sunday.
How clear, how blue
The jangling air will be!
How starched how snowy white
How rich with bells
The Sabbath clouds will be!
Chimes will be scattered from the rocking bells.
The swallows with their crisp
And joyous wings
Will skim through showers of sound.
The flowers that we gathered
Out in the fields today
Will float above the altar
Buttercup-spangled, light as air
And bright as candles.
We'll have a long procession by the river
And the whole village will turn out for it,
We'll walk that path through the tall grass
Where later we'll be haying.
We'll sing our hymns to Mary as we walk
And from far across the river
We'll hear the singing in the other villages.

2.

My mother died when I was seven
And I tried to cook for my father.
I had a big pot boiling
When he came in from the fields
But I'd only four noodles in it!
Poor child, poor child, my father said.
Both of us cried!
I went straight to the widow next door
And threw my arms around her.
Please marry my father, I said,
He's a good man, he's kind, he doesn't drink,
And she married my father!

3.

When you came to America
Your name was Anastasia
Your humble dignity was in it.
But to the rich who hired you
Your name was unpronounceable,
Your dignity a reproach.
They said We'll have to call you Nellie.

You were only a Polack after all
So they fed you only potatoes.
Is mashed is baked is boiled
You told me,
Is all potatoes!

You and your husband Dominic
Were Democrats at first,
Your bosses were Republicans.
And you said to me
They have the education
They know more
They say Republican is better
So Dominic and I we turned Republican.

When they learned that your birthday
Was the same as George Washington's birthday
They said That can't be true!
It must have been some other day!
But you were born in Poland.
In Poland, you explained to me,
Is no George Washington.

Once on Washington's birthday
We tried to go shopping together,
But the door of the store was locked.
You turned to me and said
Is closed. Is right. Is more respect.
Is father of country.

4.

You and Dominic
Once went to the theater.
In the film a child was born
The film didn't show the birth
But you heard the mother groaning
And then the baby's cry.
That wasn't right.
Birth isn't for the theater
Birth is for home
You never went again.

When the new big church was built
The old one was up for auction.
Dominic went to watch
But the man standing next to him said
Dominic, bid!
So he bid and his bid was the highest.

He came home to supper
And sat at the supper-table
Pale and not eating
You know how men are
They don't say what's wrong
So you asked him what was wrong
And then he told you
I bought the church!

Every day after work
You hitched up the wagon
And drove it to the church
For a wagon-load of lumber.
Dominic wasn't strong
He couldn't do it.

When you had all the lumber
You put up a house together
And for as long as I knew you
You lived in that house.

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5.

I saw you throw a doctor's bill away
Because he hadn't cured you
And if a workman wanted too much money
For too small a job
You were indignant.
Is no more George Washington country!
Is Khrushchev country!

But when the governor divorced
His wife of thirty years
And there was gossip and shock
You only said,
Is weakness.

Though you never hated their children,
For all your life you held a stubborn grudge
Against the Blacks the Yanks the Jews.
This was your one injustice.
In every other way
You mostly were for justice
You always had been poor
Your heart was radical.

6.

When you were old
You wrote Pope Paul in Rome
I'm only a poor old woman
But I love you very much,
And he sent you a printed blessing
Signed with his own hand.
When I saw it, you told me,
I cried three days
I was so happy!
But next time you wrote
A secretary answered.
From now on, he told you,
You may write to me instead.
You were hurt
You were offended.
Darkly you commented,
Is jealousness!

7.

You were a widow when I knew you
And you had no children
And a priest had told you
Adopt is no good
So you collected clothing
For orphans everywhere,
You answered every appeal.
Your porch was piled with boxes.
You see a picture of a little ragged child
You said to me,
And what else can you do?

Because your brother Joseph who died young
Had been a priest
You loved poor seminarians.
The doctor said, You mustn't take in washing
Any longer.
Still you took in washing
And gave away your earnings
To seminarians and children.

8.

The last time I saw you
You were eighty-four
You were in the hospital
Your hands were tied to the bed.
You'd forgotten English
You'd rejected English.
Please speak to me in English
I begged you,
I don't know any Polish.
But you said Heck with English!
And holding tight to my hand
With your tied-up hand
You spoke to me for a long time in Polish.

9.

In the company of your father
And of your lost mother
With Dominic your husband
And Joseph your brother
And those children you never saw
Who are your children,

No longer hating anyone

You have got back the joy
Of the church-bells clanging and tossing
Of the white Sunday dress
Ironed for you by your mother
Of the wildflowers fresh on the altar
And processions along the river

And songs in the open air
Those hymns in honor of Mary
That were the same
In every village
As fieldflowers are the same
In every meadow.

You have got back the joy
And more than all the joy
Of your Polish Sundays.

In the radiant sweetness
And glory of heaven
Pray for me Anastasia
Who was once called Nellie.
In heaven you are called Anastasia.

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MARKETING BOOM, LITERARY BUST

Shelf indulgence

FRANK McCONNELL

WELCOME to the third annual McConnell - quick - association trivia contest. You may give one, and only one, answer to the following question:

What do Priscilla Presley, John DeLorean, Lee Iacocca, Shirley MacLaine, and Phil Donahue all have in common that they do *not* have in common with, say, Norman Spinrad and William Gaddis?

Your first answer, of course, could well be that the members of the first group are not writers as such, while Spinrad and Gaddis are among the best living writers in America, men who have given their lives over to that most thankless, unnatural, and human of tasks, i.e. making the paper worth more after you have scribbled on it than it was before you started.

Good answer. But wrong.

Or you could say this: Priscilla Presley is distinguished, mainly, for having married while yet a teenager one of the two or three greatest singers in the history of rock and roll; John DeLorean is distinguished, mainly, for having become involved in a drug-dealing operation which made the FBI look like pre-law goons, but reflected no radiance on his own intelligence either; Lee Iacocca is distinguished, mainly, for having brought a major automotive company into bankruptcy, having been bailed out by the same federal government that tried to bust DeLorean, and then having made his company once again solvent; Shirley MacLaine is distinguished, mainly, for a twenty-year series of self-indulgent performances on stage and in film which established that she is not, really, very good as a singer or a dancer or an actress; and Phil Donahue is distinguished, mainly, by the fact that he has parlayed a vapid mid-morning talk show into a springboard for what bids fair to become one of the more massively self-congratulating egos in the history of white liberalism. Spinrad and Gaddis, on the other hand, are distinguished mainly because they write fine books.

That, also is a good answer. But still not the right one.

Walk into any bookstore, as I did on the afternoon I began this piece, and you will see prominently displayed in the window and on the first-grab shelves books by Presley, DeLorean, Iacocca, MacLaine, and Donahue — and, of course, a number of ghostwriters who get credit only at the whim of the celebrity "author."

Then try to find the latest novel by Spinrad, or by Gaddis, or by Harry Harrison, or by Jim McConkey, or by any of the hundred other brilliant young storytellers, poets, and journalists America produces every decade. If you're lucky and if it's a good bookstore, the lady behind the counter will probably know where to point you.

I do not believe that America is a country of unimaginative zombies. But I am disturbed that the people who *market* books seem to believe that we are a nation of prurient sheep who actually *care* when Priscilla finally HAD SEX with Elvis; or a nation of nanocephalic lemmings who will pant in ecstasy at Phil Donahue's — rather belated — discovery that, by gosh, this theory of evolution is really *neat*.

Anybody who tries to write for a living (by the way: nobody writes for a living, but a lot of people try to write for a living) will tell you that marketing a book doesn't mean much; it means everything. *Carpenter's Gothic* (William Gaddis's latest, and published by Viking, $16.95) is, I guarantee you, going to fall into the same vortex that swallowed up the author's first two books, *The Recognitions* and *J.R.* (reissued by Penguin recently). But Ms. Presley's lubricious reminiscences and Mr. Donahue's sophomoric sociobiology will probably go on for a long time, fueled not by the reading public's real interest, but by the fact that, thanks to the people who sell books, the reading public can't easily *find* anything else to read. When you break it all down, it's simply a matter of shelf space, baby.

Harlan Ellison, who writes *great* stories in the tradition of Poe and Kafka and Chesterton, has been saying this or something like it for years. So have a number of other writers, many as talented though most not quite as renowned as Ellison: and to no avail. Because the people who run the big presses, like the people who program the big networks, decided a long time ago to Give The People What They Want, and then promptly forgot that there is also the moral imperative to Give The People What They Need.

"So, McConnell," you say to me (and you, on the ghostly other side of the typewriter, are always bigger and tougher than I), "so you don't wanna read Priscilla Presley's memories of Elvis? So you want fancy-schmantzy novels by your intellectual pals put where her book is? So why dontcha go to another bookstore — one where they cater to your kind?"

Because, my dear reader, I stammer (edging nervously toward the Exit), you have completely mistaken my point. Remember my first question? What do Presley - DeLorean - Iacocca - MacLaine - Donahue all have in common?

"Yeah?"

Well, I didn't give you the real answer yet.

"Yeah?"

Yeah. What they have most basically in common is that they are all Silly People. Silly in the sense that, while a human being cannot always act rationally, a human being *can* always act re-

FRANK McCONNELL *writes frequently on the media for* Commonweal.

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sponsibly; and the first act of responsibility is to admit our irrationality. In other words — as good fiction tells us and self-stroking autobiographies don't — we're only really silly when with eloquence we try to deny our own universal silliness.

"Huh?"

I'll explain. There are two reasons you can write a book, one good and one bad. Biography, fiction, autobiography (which is maybe the most extreme form of fiction) can be written either as an organization or a justification of existence. And here is a simple formula, from a simple-minded man: to organize your own existence is a good thing, but to justify it is usually a bad mistake, since that is work best left to Somebody Else.

KARL RAHNER, in *The Practice of Faith*, describes the virtue of hope in terms very like the terms I would use describing the art of fiction: the imposition of order we force upon the chaotic pattern of our lives as we really lead them, in the expectation that sooner or later that chaos-turned-story will receive a cosmic validation, an intergalactic *imprimatur*, a simple utterance that yes, after all, it *did* make sense.

My life, I will say it once for all, is fully as interesting as that of Shirley Mac-Laine, and so is yours. So why do you go to B. Dalton's or Kroch's or Brentano's or wherever and buy her latest breathless revelation that, bygolly, she may have been reincarnated?

No, not because you're dumb, because you're not. But because B. Dalton or Kroch or whoever is *shoving* this bilge into your face and up your credit card while, on the back shelves, Robert Crumley and Maxine Hong Kingston and John Ashbery and a hundred other writers who deserve your attention and — yes — your friendship are panting like puppies in a pet shop window for purchases that will never be made. None of them, you see, ever tried to dance in *Irma La Douce* or married Marlo Thomas.

I return to Rahner. If writing is not a religious act, then I do not know what is. But not all religious acts are right. As Kierkegaard, I think, understood, in the realm of the religious the distinction is not between good and evil, but between sensible and stupid.

At any rate, the books you buy and the books you read may be as close as you come in this life to the apperception of transcendence: any scripture can become a sacred scripture if, through it, something other than the quotidian, something of the ineffability of language itself shines through. So don't, if you can help it, read Silly People.

Prefacing his *Life of Johnson*, Boswell observes that if only all of the great Doctor's conversations had been preserved, "we might have had him whole." With a sigh, one agrees. He was a great man, and it would have been a great thing. Looking at the gushings of the DeLoreans, MacLaines, and Donahues of the world, one sighs that so much has been preserved. Western culture should not end up as the largest possible issue of *People* magazine. Nor, unless the vice-presidents in charge of marketing have their silly way, shall it.

Books: CRITICS' CHRISTMAS CHOICES

Denis Donoghue

DENIS DONOGHUE *holds the Henry James Chair of English and American Letters at New York University. His most recent book is* Art without Mystery *(Little, Brown).*

IT HAS been a poetry-and-criticism year for me, mostly. Robert Penn Warren's *New and Selected Poems* (Random House, $9.95, 322 pp.) is a big book, big enough to give a sense of the scale and reverberation of his achievement in poetry. Unafraid of the major themes — love, history, America — he has always been adventurous in diction and form; and especially in the last fifteen years or so, taking his second breath with *Or Else: Poems 1968-1974*, he has gained new masteries, opening upon new thresholds. If I have a quarrel with the *New and Selected Poems*, it is because I find it too severe with the early poems. I miss "History" and several fairly early poems I came to love under Cleanth Brooks's fine guidance. But there is enough left to appease me.

Kenneth Koch's *Selected Poems 1950-1982* has just come into its paperback form (Random House, $9.95, 236 pp.) and now, as if with a flick of his wrist, he has come up with a new book, *On the Edge* (Elizabeth Sifton Books: Viking, $7.95, 112 pp.) — I have just read it in galleys. A book in two parts, the first is a sequence of impressions of Africa, the second a flight of autobiography: both poems are winningly free-wheeling, written so engagingly that you would easily make the mistake of thinking this kind of poetry an unarduous matter of throwing words in the air and watching them land in good order. Not so. To write like Koch, you have to have a lot of power and keep most of it in reserve. So the poetry moves daringly but unpretentiously between past and present, memories and currencies of sentiment jostling one another within the strong propriety of the cadence. Koch is a superb craftsman: that is, you don't need to take any special notice of his craft, it exerts due pressure without adverting to itself as pressure.

Jeffrey Meyers's *Hemingway: A Biography* (Harper & Row, $27.50, 644 pp.) is a book as diversely telling as its subject. Meyers is a continuously vigorous writer, impatient of nonsense and cant, a sharp intelligence in full possession of his material. Immense labor made this biography possible, but Meyers's sentences are so fully empowered that the labor is felt only as energy driving toward its chosen end. I wouldn't like to get in the way of those sentences or try to hold them back for interrogation. I'm not sure how dreadful a man Hemingway was, or whether he was a more thoroughgoing

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monster than many other writers: in these considerations, there is no merit in measuring the precise degree of unpleasantness. But the new biography is splendid: and Meyers inspires, without seeming to make such a demand, every confidence.

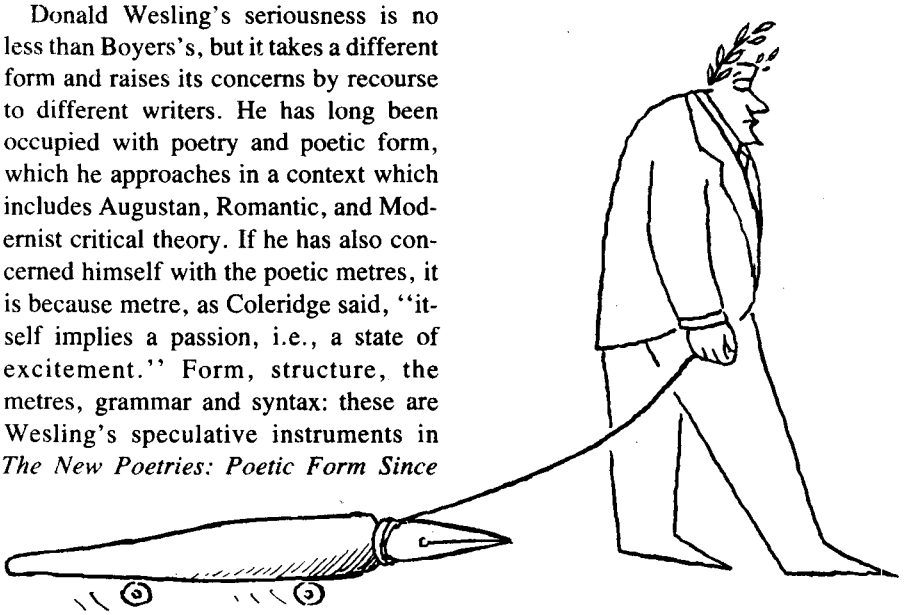
Robert Boyers's *Atrocity and Amnesia: The Political Novel Since 1945* (Oxford University Press, $29.95, 259 pp.) is a study of the relations between politics and fiction in Milan Kundera, V.S. Naipaul, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Nadine Gordimer, Garcia Marquez, Alejo Carpentier, Graham Greene, Günter Grass, George Steiner, Jorge Semprun, and Miguel Asturias. To a certain extent, Boyers takes up where Irving Howe left off in his *Politics and the Novel* (1957), a magnificent book which continues to hold its influential bearing upon the question of politics and imagination. I can't comment on every chapter of Boyers's book — he has read some of his authors far more systematically than I have — but where my reading coincides with his, I find his sense of political fiction extremely persuasive. In any case, and even if I disagreed with him more often than I do, I would still rush to welcome a critical book which works upon the understanding that fiction is not necessarily the reflexive thing we're often told it is: it is often an imaginative incarnation of issues which are indeed, in the world at large, matters of someone's life and someone's death.

Donald Wesling's seriousness is no less than Boyers's, but it takes a different form and raises its concerns by recourse to different writers. He has long been occupied with poetry and poetic form, which he approaches in a context which includes Augustan, Romantic, and Modernist critical theory. If he has also concerned himself with the poetic metres, it is because metre, as Coleridge said, "itself implies a passion, i.e., a state of excitement." Form, structure, the metres, grammar and syntax: these are Wesling's speculative instruments in *The New Poetries: Poetic Form Since Coleridge and Wordsworth* (Bucknell University Press, $32.50, 228 pp.). Very few critics are working, these days, as close to the texture of poems as Wesling is: few have anything like his sensitivity to the movement, whether sway or drift, of modern poetry. I have much admired his work, and seize this occasion to praise it.

Robert Lekachman

ROBERT LEKACHMAN *is Distinguished Professor of Economics at the City University of New York. His books include* Greed Is Not Enough, *and the forthcoming* Visions & Nightmares: America after Reagan.

BY A WIDE margin, *Common Ground* (Knopf, $19.95, 659 pp.), J. Anthony Lukas's humane exploration of the behavior of three Boston families during the busing crisis of the mid-1970s, is the year's, probably the decade's, best book about how urban Americans work and live. Lukas has achieved the near-miracle of evoking sympathy for the under-educated, sometimes violent Irish Catholic McGoffs, for the even more beleaguered black Twymons, and the well-meaning, highly educated, securely elitist Divers. Judge Arthur Garrity, whose administrative takeover of the Boston school system started a cycle of white and black violence, emerges as neither a liberal hero nor a conservative villain.



What Lukas's almost excruciatingly nonjudgmental stance makes clear is this: white liberals, almost all of them (the Divers were a rare exception) suburbanites, including Judge Garrity, imposed a solution to racial segregation on two culturally and economically deprived communities who shared violent prejudices against each other. Real sacrifices were demanded of both communities for an abstract ideal of integration for which neither was prepared. Busing might indeed have promoted racial equality if poor blacks and poor whites had been assigned to excellent suburban schools, and the sons and daughters of prosperous middle-class families had been assigned to the miserable schools of Roxbury and South Boston. Funds would have flowed to those schools once middle-class families developed a compelling interest in them. No danger. Boston is a classic example of remedies imposed, at no cost to themselves, by good liberals on groups less privileged, less powerful, and less educated than themselves.

Irving Howe's *Socialism and America* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, $17.95, 225 pp.) is a life-long democratic socialist's meditation on Werner Sombart's 1906 question and book title *Why Is There No Socialism in America?* Howe does not deny the continuing relevance of Sombart's explanation — the absence of a feudal tradition, the social ease between classes, and the relative abundance of roast beef and apple pie. He stresses, in addition, left-wing factionalism, Franklin Roosevelt's successful theft of socialist support, and repeated episodes of repression. Eugene Debs and other socialist leaders were jailed during World War I because of their opposition to American participation in a "capitalist" conflict. The Palmer raids of the 1920s and the McCarthyite extravaganza of the 1950s reiterated national willingness to assault radicals. The best prospect Howe can conjure up for socialists is for them to ally themselves with liberals and in effect to strengthen the left wing of the Democratic party. For the mingled myth and reality of America as a land of opportunity is far too power-

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ful to justify the fantasies in which Howe indulged as a youth of the possibility of a socialist America.

Economists do occasionally write books in ordinary English worth attention. Martin Weitzman's *The Share Economy: Conquering Stagflation* (Harvard University, $15, 167 pp.) is a mercifully brief "solution" for unemployment. It amounts to a transformation of our wage payment system from fixed hourly rates to sums that depend upon the productivity of new employees. If General Motors and smaller goliaths could incur declining labor costs as they hired more people, they would do so, reduce car prices, and sell more vehicles. If unions accepted this analysis, they just might accept slightly lower wages in the short run in the hope of higher rewards in the future.

In blaming unemployment on high wages, Weitzman conveniently ignores managerial incompetence, the notorious failures of industries like steel and auto to adopt advanced technologies, the scandalous overpayment of incompetent managers, and the preference of major corporations for mergers and acquisitions over attention to the quality of their product, not to mention the record of auto companies and others in raising, instead of lowering, prices when consumer-demand flags. Still, for the curious, Weitzman's tract is an excellent example of the economic mind at work. It has evoked repeatedly favorable attention on the *New York Times* editorial page.

Weitzman's MIT colleague, Lester Thurow, is a committed egalitarian and occasional adviser to Democratic presidential candidates. His readable, though unnecessarily prolix and repetitive *The Zero-Sum Solution* (Simon & Schuster, $18.95, 414 pp.) combines an alarmist diagnosis with a series of controversial and politically implausible therapies. Thurow fears that we have begun to repeat the decline of England as a world-class economy. The British have spent the best part of a century losing ground in world markets because they have failed to match the technological innovations of their American, German, and Japanese rivals. England now is poorer than Italy and may soon fall behind Spain. We risk the same fate unless we undertake a drastic restructuring of our economy.

Thurow's model is Japanese. We must end hostile confrontations between labor and management. Cooperation and worker participation are the clues to product quality. We must spend more money on public education so that Americans become as well-trained in science and mathematics as young Japanese. We need to narrow the enormous gap between the rewards of ordinary workers and top managers. If in some industries, wages should be reduced by a third, then executive salaries ought to be slashed by two-thirds. Japanese corporate leaders earn about a third of their American counterparts. Something must be wrong with markets that enrich managers who are regularly outmatched by less well-rewarded foreign rivals. On Thurow's wish list are coherent industrial policy, a value-added tax to encourage saving and discourage consumption, and an energy tax.

Thurow identifies himself as an "intellectual pessimist but an emotional optimist." Recognizing the long political odds against his program, he still puts his money on America's capacity to rise to challenges. If the political climate improves and Democrats become receptive to new programs, Thurow offers them abundant policy nutrition.

Ann Hulbert

ANN HULBERT *is a senior editor of* The New Republic.

THE post-feminist era has been hard on men, in life and also in fiction. "How sensitive or assertive am I?" too many poor protagonists have had to worry. Thanks to their burdensome selfconsciousness, they have often ended up looking silly. But several of this year's authors have kindly equipped their main male characters with true dignity—a rare blend of rigidity and resilience. These men are not haughty or highfalutin. On the contrary, most of them are in some fundamental way hapless, or at least they understand that they are at the mercy of luck. But that knowledge does not make them helpless, which is their saving grace.

Most of the men hail from the South, where old-fashioned dignity, as well as eccentricity, are not yet extinct. Peter Taylor's sixth collection of stories, *The Old Forest: And Other Stories* (Doubleday, $16.95, 358 pp.), is a sampling of his unparalleled domestic portraiture. Quietly he tells about men, primarily—fathers, sons, suitors, husbands, soldiers—who lead outwardly unremarkable lives in the sedate, still segregated South between the world wars. Yet most of them stumble on moments of moral sympathy and feel their lives expand, fearfully but also, as the narrator of one story explains, wonderfully. "I was fifty, but I had just discovered what it means to see the world through another man's eyes. It is a discovery you are lucky to make at any age, and one that is no less marvelous whether you make it at fifty or fifteen. Because it is only then that the world, as you have seen it through your own eyes, will begin to tell you things about yourself."

At the center of Nancy Lemann's comic first novel, *Lives of the Saints* (Knopf, $13.95, 144 pp.), is a young man who recalls the prodigal sons in Taylor's stories. A "wastrel youth" in New Orleans, Claude Collier is adrift—sometimes dreamily, sometimes wildly—in an Old Southern social landscape where butlers are loyal and children call their father "sir." Not only does Claude fail to "find himself," but he loses his serene little brother, who swills Coke, and his gentle father, who spouts Greek — two more singular males in Lemann's pantheon of anachronistic characters who lead lives of quaint, but dignified, desperation.

Anne Tyler's eccentric Southerner in *The Accidental Tourist* (Knopf, $16.95, 355 pp.), her deft tenth novel, has to venture further from home to see the world through other eyes. Macon Leary of Baltimore, a mild and inordinately methodical man who writes tourist guides for people who hate to travel, is happily shaken up by impetuous Muriel, an employee at the dog kennel where he boards his Welsh corgi, Edward (another memorable male). Thanks to the arrival

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of this mettlesome woman in his tame routines, it dawns on Macon that life is full of opportunities to seize, not just inconveniences to navigate.

In British novelist David Lodge's brisk and funny *Small World* (Macmillan, $15.95, 339 pp.), a motley, malicious array of academics jet all over the world to literary conferences, where they deliver solipsistic papers and hardly see anything. Except for Persse McGarrigle, a young Irish poet and lecturer whose quest requires him to keep a sharp eye out. While others vie for the UNESCO Chair of Literary Criticism, he's pursuing a gorgeous colleague named Angelica. His luck is terrible; Lodge subjects him to a globe-trotting ordeal of crossed paths, implausible predicaments, confused identities, and baffling coincidences to sink the heart of the most ardent suitor. But Persse proves himself to be endlessly valiant — one more sturdy-souled man for this season.

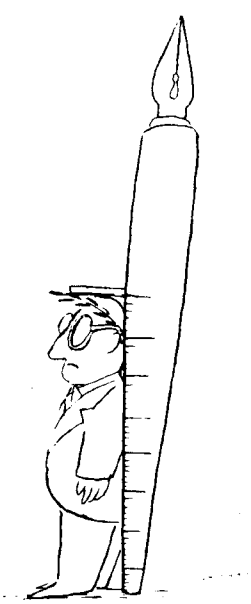
Robert John Russell

ROBERT JOHN RUSSELL *is assistant professor of theology and science at the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, and director of The Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, Berkeley.*

THE RELATIONSHIPS between science and religion span the gamut from conflict to a new rapproachment and cross fertilization. During the past year a number of books have appeared which point towards the positive contributions from one to the other. I have selected four books for their breadth of approach and variety of technical levels. The authors include theologians who view science and the philosophy of science as critically important to theological research; scientists who deal with religion as it shapes contemporary worldviews and directs action towards nature and society; philosophers of science whose work is critically important for comparing the formation, testing, and interpretation of scientific theory and religious doctrine. I would specially recommend Arthur Peacocke's thought which seeks to bridge the fields of science, theology, and philosophy, and to work towards a new theology of nature.

Science and Reality: Recent Work in the Philosophy of Science, edited by James T. Cushing, C. F. Delaney, and Gary M. Butting. University of Notre Dame, $11.95, 195 pp.

This is a stunning collection of technical papers at the cutting edge of philosophy of science. The book is dedicated to Ernan McMullin for his research, professional leadership, and teaching in philosophy. Its eight papers fall in two sections: the scientific status of various disciplines and theories; questions regarding the ontology of scientific theories. Ronald N. Giere's paper on the approach in which historical, logical, political, psychological, and sociological dimensions of science are all represented. In presenting a "naturalistic, decision-theoretic" interpretation of the role of experiment in science, Giere attempts to capture the importance of the empirical as well as the realistic conceptuality of scientific theory. Larry Laudan opposes both the relativism of the sociology of science and existing attempts at a realist interpretation, arguing instead for the logic of instrumentation to account for the success of science. Arthur Fine gives a careful analysis of realism in the thought of Albert Einstein. Edward MacKinnon's analysis of the semantics of quantum theory includes a helpful overview of logistic and historicist approaches to interpreting science. Incisive papers by Philip Quinn, Adolf Grunbaum, Nancy Cartwright and Henry Mendell, and Bas van Fraasen make this extraordinary book required reading for any who are seriously concerned with the philosophy of science and its implicit importance to interdisciplinary work.



Cry of the Environment: Rebuilding the Christian Creation Tradition, edited by Philip N. Joranson and Ken Butigan. Bear & Company, Sante Fe, NM, $11.95, 468 pp.

The underlying theme of this broad and generally non-technical anthology is an acknowledgment of the role of Judeo-Christian religion in the environmental crisis and a search to revision the biblical creation tradition such that nature and human nature are celebrated together. It contains essays by twenty-three scholars, including theologians, scientists, teachers, ecologists, and artists; these focus on the Judeo-Christian tradition as problem and resource, and draw on the natural sciences, art, and spirituality to bring about holistic creation consciousness. The value of this book lies in the diversity of its contributors, the scholarship of their arguments, and the common thread of hope and future which weaves throughout the book. The book includes a section on several institutes and centers at which further study may be pursued.

Anthropology in Theological Perspective, by Wolfhart Pannenberg. Translated by M.J. O'Connell. Westminster, $38.95, 552 pp.

Wolfhart Pannenberg is an internationally acclaimed Protestant theologian whose numerous books and articles span the domain of religious scholarship with characteristic attention to detail and precise control of the subject. In *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, Pannenberg launches a critical appraisal of the natural, psychological, and social sciences as they affect the foundations of theology. In particular he draws on human biology, psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology, and history to interpret two basic theological issues: the image of God in human beings, and sin. As he has done in previous work, Pannenberg brings the results of this analysis into the general context of history in

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which the formation of identity arises, and in which God works to bring about the eschatological future.

Intimations of Reality: Critical Realism in Science and Religion, by Arthur Peacocke, University of Notre Dame, $4.95, 94 pp.

Arthur Peacocke is an Anglican theologian and research biochemist whose many publications in the interaction of religion and science aim at bringing fundamental theological concerns together with the contemporary worldview of science. This brief book, based on his 1983 Mendenhall lectures at DePauw Univeristy, is aimed at college and seminary students, and serves as an excellent introduction to Peacocke's work as a whole. Here Peacocke compares scientific and theological methods and draws on current physics and biology in describing God's relation to the world and the emergence of human beings. According to Peacocke, science is not just a collection of facts but a structure composed of paradigms and models which, though analogical and incomplete, points to real entities in nature. Similarly religious ideas, though they lead us to the sacred, need not themselves be treated as sacred and above critical rethinking. Instead, they too are models of religious experience which are analogical and which draw on scientific models of nature.

From physics we learn that the universe has a history of radical change, that the future is open, and that the emergence of life and humankind is deeply intertwined with the global character of the universe. Hence Peacocke talks about God in terms of continuous creation in time and space; God is immanent to every event in the cosmic drama. From biology we learn that all life on earth shares a common link through the genetic code, that evolution proceeds by chance and mutation without apparent purpose, that pain and suffering are part of the evolution that produced humankind. From this Peacocke talks about our continuity with all of nature, about a God who creates through chance by improvising and exploring the possibilities in nature, and about a God who suffers with us so that the cross is not just a theme for our spiritual life but includes all of creation. Peacocke combines the themes of divine transcendence and immanence into a panentheistic vision of God "in whom we live and move and have our being."

This book captures the spirit and vision of a theologian-scientist at the frontiers of thought. It is my first choice among this year's publications.

Peter W. Williams

PETER W. WILLIAMS *chairs the religion department at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He is co-editor of the forthcoming three-volume* Encyclopedia of Religion in America *(Scribners).*

In my own field of American religious history, where monographs are now turned out at a dizzying rate, the appearance of Martin Marty's *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Little, Brown, $25, 500 pp.) is a welcome event for the reader who appreciates the melding of telling personal detail, broad synthetic sweep, and a command of the narrative art. Marty focuses on individual "pilgrims" in the development of America's religious communities and institutions, and focuses on individual biographies as illustrative of broader themes. He is especially good at weaving accounts of very disparate careers into gracefully unified chapters which capture the ethos of distinctive eras of religious and cultural life. This is not the place to look for intensive studies of theological and institutional development, but it is an eminently readable story, or collection of interwoven stories, which illuminate American religious history as thoroughly as can be done in a single volume.

Another highly ambitious and accessible investigation into the broad meaning of the American experience is *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (University of California Press, $16.95, 355 pp.) by Robert Bellah and associates. The authors here continue the on-going theme of Bellah's work in humanistic sociology in trying to place the contemporary disarray of American society into both historical and empirical context through the analysis of extensive interviews conducted in a number of representative communities. Their conclusion is that many middle-class Americans are out of touch, at least at a conscious level, with the social dimensions of human values, and that American life is threatened by disintegration through a quest for individualistic achievement and fulfillment getting out of hand. Their prescriptions for collective cultural re-integration and rededication are a bit on the vague side, but their attempt to demonstrate the semi-articulated confusion of American values is highly provocative. Complementing this study is the late Warren Sussman's collection of essays published as *History as Culture: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (Pantheon, $12.95, paper, 321 pp.), which deals from a number of perspectives with the metamorphosis of America from a production- to a consumption-oriented society.

Yet another feat of monumental synthesis is Spiro Kostof's *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (Oxford University Press, $45, 788 pp.), which is a highly successful attempt to place the history of our built environment into social and cultural perspective. Kostof ranges from Stone Age caves to the AT&T Building, with splendid photographs and drawings accompanied by a text which is readable and fair-minded. Like all of the other books cited here, this is a work which refuses compartmentalized treatment of its subject matter, and deals with architecture instead as an integral dimension of the broader human experience.

Finally, I cannot resist including Richard Moll's *The Public Ivys* (Viking Penguin, $18.95, 289 pp.), which includes my own Miami University with such other state-supported institutions as Berkeley, Chapel Hill, and William and Mary as lower-cost alternatives to the "real Ivys" in terms of educational quality and collegiate ambience. Moll's descriptions of the various campuses sometimes verge on caricature, but his writing is lively and his suggestions eminently practical in these days of $15,000 *per annum* financial packages.

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William M. Sullivan

WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN *is associate professor of philosophy at LaSalle University. He is author of* Reconstructing Public Philosophy *(1982) and co-author, with Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, Anne Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton, of* Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life *(California, 1985).*

"IN ORDER to reclaim our society," E. L. Doctorow wrote recently, "we need the words to find it." While made in the context of a discussion about directions in current American fiction, Doctorow's observation could stand as an epigraph for much of the most significant new work in what were once called the moral sciences. The current return to a more integral and self-conscious social reflection might be called a renewal of practical philosophy. This turn of mind has certain distinguishing characteristics. The sort of social self-reflection typical of practical philosophy is rooted, often explicitly, in ethical, political, religious, and aesthetic traditions which have shaped modern discourse about society. Yet, this kind of investigation, while it turns to tradition for illumination, does so impelled by concern with developments in the world of the present.

Thus the new practical philosophy is able to see itself not as sanitized observation, but as involved, however critically, in an on-going conversation that is genuinely public. Perhaps no English-speaking philosopher has contributed more than Charles Taylor toward the recovery of this viewpoint. The two volumes of his papers, especially *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers, Vol. I* (Cambridge University, $39.50, 360 pp.), while formulated with philosophical precision, richly repay reading even for the non-specialist.

But what, then, is or can be the contribution of ethical reflection to the actual practice of living well? With British finesse Bernard Williams critically explores the resources of philosophical ethics in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (Harvard University, $17.50, 248 pp.). Williams points out the need to reconnect ethics with reflection on social practice.

It is this need which sociologist Richard Madsen richly meets in his theoretically powerful yet affecting meditation on the story of China's tumultuous recent past as seen from first-hand accounts of life in one rural community. *Morality and Power in a Chinese Village* (University of California, $24.50, 200 pp.) proves the dependence of individual character, and even basic social decency, upon a complicated and fragile web of public dialogue.

This theme of the interrelation between the self and cultural, institutional conditions recalls America's great public philosopher of this century, John Dewey. Historian Bruce Kuklich's *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (Yale University, $22.50, 311 pp.) brings American Protestantism to the fore as the cultural matrix which formed American intellectual life, even as that life took on a secular character. In counterpoint, theologian George Lindbeck makes a radical application of the insight that theoretical discourse is rooted in the practical life of a community. In *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Westminster, $9.95 paper, 180 pp.) theology is the theory and the Christian church is the community — an articulation which produces new insights into the contemporary religious situation.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, *a political theorist who has studied at the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute, is an associate professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is the author of* Public Man, Private Woman *(Princeton).*

THREE of the four books on my list speak to my current preoccupation — obsession may be the better word — with men, women, and war. Freeman Dyson's *Weapons and Hope* (Harper and Row, $17.95, 340 pp.), works to bring the disparate worlds of warriors and victims into a discursive relationship with one another. "The world of the warriors," Dyson writes, "is the world I see when I go to Washington or to California to consult with military people about their technical problems. That world is overwhelmingly male-dominated." And, he adds, its style is "cool," technical, quantitative. "The world of the victims . . . on the contrary, [is] women and children-dominated." It is a world whose members speak an intense, emotion-packed language of tragedy and fear. It is Dyson's contention that unless these two worlds find some common meeting ground, however fragile and tentative, we will never have the "fruitful nuclear debate" we so desperately require. Dyson himself evokes both worlds compellingly.

A very different book, Evan S. Connell's *Son of the Morning Star: Custer and the Little Bighorn* (North Point Press, $20, $5 paper, 464 pp.), takes the reader on a rollicking historical ride replete with fascinating side-shows, vivid vignettes, stark scenarios of cruelty, chicanery, and often comical miscalculations tragic in their effects. Custer, neither demonized nor valorized, emerges as a strange bird indeed — a man of abundant charm, great flair, and reckless courage. Undone by ambition, he isn't quite a tragic figure. There is far too much bathos in the tale as Connell tells it for that. Connell's book fits no settled *genre*. He creates his own. We see events from many perspectives. By humanizing all the participants, Connell sharpens our judgments on the follies and fates of some.

The Vietnam Vets, or many in their ranks, continue to bear witness to the terrible events in which they themselves participated. *Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam,* edited by Bernard Edelman (W.W. Norton, $13.95, 316 pp.), packs a potent moral punch. Not all of these men wound up opposing the war, though many did. Not all of them are listed KIA, but many are. We are reminded of why we should not forget. During the carnage, thousands of young Americans tried to come to grips with what the war was doing to them, to their country, and to the people they were there to "defend." One, in a powerful

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poem entitled, "What Am I Doing Here?" ends with: "We are your sons, America,/And you cannot change that. When you awake,/We will still be here." They are indeed, and even before most of us realized it they were offering testimony in private that now becomes part of the public record of our most tragic war.

Finally, one novel — and it isn't about war! Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (Viking, $16.95, 326 pp.), portrays a world in which everyone is enmeshed in "white noise," human sensibilities penetrated by incessantly operating TV sets, purring appliances, the never-ending hum of never-ending traffic on the near, but invisible, freeway. Adults and children revel in disasters on the nightly news — that is, until the book's protagonists are themselves caught up in an "air-borne toxic incident" which destroys whatever immunization from poison, pollution, and evacuation middle-class professional families think they may have. Fear is the preeminent motif of *White Noise*. DeLillo's central character, knowing he is growing a tumor from which he will die, offers, from his fear, a recognition that we no longer have alien Others to fear if we are honest with ourselves. On some level, in some terrible way, we have become the fear that is around us.

Times are tough.

Grace Schulman

GRACE SCHULMAN *is poetry editor of* The Nation *and Director of the Poetry Center, 92nd Street YM-YWHA. Her most recent collection of poems is* Hemispheres *(Sheep Meadow Press).*

WHAT THE LIGHT WAS LIKE. By Amy Clampitt. Alfred A. Knopf. $14.95, $8.95, paper, 110 pp.

In her second book, following a brilliant performance in *The Kingfisher*, Amy Clampitt celebrates the current moment in its beauty and squalor. Fiercely she praises common things with accuracy and clarity. Her passion for the ordinary is conveyed by her skillful use of the crowded line, reminiscent of Gerard Manley Hopkins, by her accumulation of detail, by her presentation of an animal ("Bertie Goes Hunting," for example), in one or two long, breathless sentences.

With inquisitive fervor, she writes of the natural world and of city life: berries grow unexpectedly in a foul bog; a silver cove in Maine recalls a Crivelli angel; a rose is "the size of a perfectly manufactured crimson fingernail . . ." In one of my favorite poems here, "The Reedbeds of Hackensack," she focuses on phragmites growing in the Hackensack River, asking: "Is there a poetry of the incorrigibly ugly?"

Paradoxically, the poet's themes, in this book, are death and loss: she portrays her dead brother, to whom the book is dedicated, in "A Curfew;" she gazes at a hard, ugly funeral in "Burial in Cypress Hills." Moreover, the central section of the book is a biographical homage to John Keats, in which the poet achieves a remarkably close identification with the dying man.

It is, in fact, Amy Clampitt's knowledge of loss that generates her celebration of life. In the title poem, it is a drowning man's final lucid moments that the speaker tries to recapture:

> I find it
> tempting to imagine what,
> when the blood roared, overflowing its
> cerebral sluiceway,
> and the iridescence
> of his last perception, charring, gave way
> to unreversed,
> irrevocable dark,
> the light out there was like . . .

The Mural of Wakeful Sleep. By Laurence Lieberman. Macmillan, $16.30, $8.95, paper, 110 pp.

Throughout his fine work, Laurence Lieberman portrays an excited American traveler relentlessly seeking facts that will objectify his wonder of the exotic. Candid, warm, open, startled by what he sees, unafraid to explore all he can, he is reminiscent of Henry James in his incessant desire for knowledge of new places and people.

In the title poem of his last book, "God's Measurements," he gazes at the statue of a Japanese god and exclaims, "Why do we so thrill at eye-guessed / estimates of measurements, measurements." And in his new book, the questions increase. Standing in a Caribbean church, the poet-as-adventurer is transfixed by a mural that fills an entire wall, and sees enormous human figures whose faces are "luminous / with a light / that baffles the eye." With characteristic fascination for dimensions, he exclaims: "Size eludes / beholders of the whole wall at once. Eyesight flits / from corner to corner. . ."

In five areas of the West Indies, the voyager collects evidence for miracles that evade his inquiries: a procession of baptisms in Nassau Bay; an architect monk who, having built a monastery under vows of silence, proceeds to build some two dozen churches on various islands; a dwarf striding on tall posts decorated with bananas.

No less intriguing than his subjects are his cadences. Lieberman makes original use of syllabic stanzaic patterns that contain his plangent outcries, his recitals of prodigious facts.

The Long Approach. By Maxine Kumin. Viking. $14.95, 80 pp.

Maxine Kumin's poetry is, at its center, profoundly human. Throughout her work, she has displayed a tough-minded, unsentimental compassion for the patient animals she knows well; she has portrayed men and women with generous regard, and also with an acute eye for common virtues and moral aspirations.

These qualities, as well as her close identification with the land, the farm, and natural life, enable her, in *The Long Approach*, to deal with subjects that are difficult at best, which she treats with directness, and with a stark bareness of utterance: nuclear war; ungoverned technological advances; senseless modern combat.

This is an important book. It succeeds because the author writes beautifully of her rich full world that is in imminent danger. "Getting Through," for example, contains these lines:

> Snow falls on the pregnant mares,
> is followed by a thaw, and then
> refreezes so that everywhere
> their hill upheaves into a glass

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mountain.
The horses skid, stiff-legged, correct
position, break through the crust
and stand around disconsolate
lipping wisps of hay.

Roger Copeland

ROGER COPELAND *teaches at Oberlin College and has written for the* New York Times, *the* Village Voice, The New Republic, *and* Partisan Review. *His books include* What Is Dance? *and the forthcoming* Cunningham's Legacy.

"THINGS fall apart, the center cannot hold." Yeats, of course, wasn't talking about the publishing industry's treatment of the performing arts, but his words apply nonetheless. (And I'm sure he'd agree that if the phrase fits, share it.) Where, oh where, are the serious but non-specialized books aimed at a broad-based, well-educated readership? Why must we continually choose between two equally undesirable extremes: the journalistic oversimplification of mass market coffee table books whose "text" is little more than a series of captions for the glossy photos, or the academic hyperspecialization of jargonized studies in which performances become pretexts for a cumbersome display of "methodology"? Here are some happy exceptions to that rule: serious books written in a lucid and lively style that will appeal to specialists and non-specialists alike.

Stephen Bach's *Final Cut* (Morrow, $19.95, 432 pp.) is surely the definitive study of the new Hollywood. Subtitled "Dreams and Disaster in the Making of Heaven's Gate," Bach's book recounts a tempestuous saga of corporate folly and directorial ego run rampant. We're all too familiar with the horror stories of the old Hollywood in which the masterwork of a Welles or a Von Stroheim is mutilated by some moronic mogul who possesses what used to be the producer's prerogative, final cut. But this is the story of what happens when that holiest of cinematic grails, final cut, is entrusted to a relatively inexperienced director like Michael Cimino, hailed prematurely for one flash-in-the-pan box office success, the grotesquely overrated *Deerhunter*. *Heaven's Gate* was originally budgeted at $7.5 million, but finally weighed in at $36 million. It promptly sank, dragging an entire studio, United Artists, down with it. Never has a film seen by so few affected the lives of so many.

Another very different sort of film book worth nothing is Stephen Koch's *Stargazer* (Marion Boyars, $11.95, 155 pp.), re-issued this year in paperback with a dazzling new introduction by the author. Originally published in 1973, *Stargazer* is the best book ever written about Andy Warhol and the voyeuristic gaze that constitutes the foundation of both his art and his life. Although ostensibly a study of Warhol's films, the book is actually both an evocation and analysis of the detached, hedonistic coolness that pervaded the New York art world in the 1960s following the repudiation of abstract expressionism and the triumph of the pop art ethos.

The most exciting dance book of the year is probably *Balanchine's Tchaikovsky* by Solomon Volkov (Simon & Schuster, $19.95, 252 pp.), best known in this country for his collaboration with Shostakovich on *Testimony*. Volkov conducted thirty-three interviews with Balanchine during the last two years of the great choreographer's life and the resulting book is the next best thing to a full-fledged Balanchine autobiography. Characteristically, it's only when speaking of another artist, his musical muse Tchaikovsky, that Balanchine begins to speak unguardedly about himself. Balanchine's collaborations with Stravinsky are usually cited as the centerpiece of his modernist period, whereas his equally impressive body of work set to scores by Tchaikovsky are generally regarded as an extended, nostalgic homage to the Russian Imperial classicism of his childhood. But Balanchine makes it clear in these interviews that he has always considered Tchaikovsky a pioneering modernist, not a gossamer, moonlit romantic. And he makes his case persuasively.

Finally, the most stimulating book about the theater I've read this year is *Peter Hall's Diaries* (Harper & Row, $24, 414 pp.) which covers the years in the mid-1970s when Britain's new and controversial home for The National Theatre was under construction on London's South Bank. Bursting with vivid, thumbnail sketches of Olivier, Richardson, Pinter, Beckett, and countless others, Hall's diaries are ultimately about the unavoidably "public" nature of the theater and the inextricable connection, both aesthetic and economic, between a healthy theater and the public sector. Essential reading for anyone who hopes to survive the Reagan/Thatcher era of diminished public subsidies for the arts.

Joann Wolski Conn

JOANN WOLSKI CONN *is associate professor of theology in the graduate program in pastoral counseling at Neumann College, Aston, Pa. Her book,* Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development, *will be published by Paulist in February, 1986. She is also book review editor of* Horizons, *the journal of the College Theology Society.*

THE BEST theology books aim to educate, challenge, inspire, and support. They release theological ideas in ways that stir the waters of prayer, teaching, spiritual direction, and pastoral ministry. These six books achieve that goal.

Caring for Marriage by Denise Lardner Carmody (Paulist Press, $7.95, 182 pp.) joins feminist and biblical insights to offer practical, positive suggestions for the theology of marital love, marital work, parenting, and marital ministry. Here the stories are engaging, the language refreshing, the theological interpretation of marital experience profound.

William M. Thompson's *The Jesus Debate* (Paulist Press, $12.95, 437 pp.) is a major theological achievement. Brilliant analysis of the classical and contemporary christological debates enables Thompson to arrive at such an original liberationist clarity, focus, passion, and pastoral sensitivity that the book is a pleasure to read.

Letty M. Russell edits *Feminist In-*

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terpretation of the Bible (Westminster, $10.95, 166 pp.) as resources for collective discussion and preaching as well as personal study and meditation. Eleven fine essays unite theory and practice. Some authors explain feminist consciousness and its implications for the interpretation of Scripture, others demonstrate its practical implications. For example, one essay works out a feminist approach to battered women.

Experiencing God: Theology as Spirituality by Kenneth Leech (Harper & Row, $20.95, 500 pp.) completes the three-part series Leech began in 1977 with *Soul Friend*. The concern here, as in his earlier books, is primarily pastoral: uniting theological work with the spiritual quest. Leech has a marvelous capacity to focus his comprehensive grasp of Scripture and spiritual classics upon a single unifying theme. Here the focus is on God. And, here, more than in the previous two books, God is mother as well as father.

Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine E. Gudorf, and Mary D. Pellauer edit *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience* (Winston Seabury, $14.95, 310 pp.). These fascinating essays represent three moments in the doing of feminist ethics. One section analyzes the experiences which prompt moral reflection: distributing house and child care responsibilities, violence against women, etc. Another section notes the values and commitments to which the authors were led by shared reflection upon their experiences. For example, one author rediscovers the links between sexuality and spirituality in black culture. A third section situates feminist ethical claims within the field of ethics as a discipline.

How to Make It Through the Day by John Carmody (Nashville, Tenn., The Upper Room, $5.95, 110 pp.) outlines a process of Christian decision-making. This prolific, perceptive theologian gives us, in jargon-free language, a five-step method for discerning the appropriate response to God's presence in our lives. If one already knows the Ignatian rules for discernment and the theoretical work of Bernard Lonergan, one says, "Aha! How simply, yet accurately, Carmody presents their central message!"

Correspondence

(Continued from page 658)

high by comparison since very few intermediate school students in the U.S. drop out, even in the poorest urban areas.

He then goes on to compare peaches and pears by stating that ". . . the Cuban literacy campaign . . . raised the literacy rates from 76 percent . . . to an unprecedented 96 percent of the population." In the same breath he quotes Jonathan Kozal's estimate that in the U.S. "44 percent of blacks and 55 percent of Hispanics are either total, functional, or marginal readers." Even if we assume that these figures can be trusted, they are *not* equivalent quantities and cannot be compared by any stretch of scientific guidelines. How can Mr. Berube get away with comparing the literacy rate of the entire Cuban population, which includes a heterogeneous mix of all economic segments, with the supposed literacy rate of the poorest minorities of the U.S. population?

As an academician Mr. Berube should be more careful and much more scientifically accurate in his statistical analysis of data.

DOMENICA A. LAMANNA

Free lunch in Cuba

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Maurice Berube's article on Cuba ["Assessing a Revolution," September 6] is admirable for its reasonable tone — how seldom we see something written on Cuba which is not hysterical! I do have a few comments, however, based on a close association with Cuba: I have been visiting Cuba regularly since 1969 and in the past year-and-a-half have been there a dozen times, most recently for five weeks this summer.

It is true that the traditional diet of Cubans has been altered, but this, from a nutritional point of view, is not necessarily bad: meat, coffee, rice, and beans, which he mentions as being in short supply, do not a nutritional diet make. Nor do cigars and cigarettes. Fish, chicken, eggs, cheese, fruits and vegetables are *not* the traditional foods Cubans love, but are they not healthier? Further, although Mr. Berube mentions the parallel markets and items which are sold *por la libre* (i.e., outside of the *libreta*, the ration book), he doesn't give them enough emphasis. Few Cubans rely on the *libreta*, even for the statistical four-fifths of their diet. Every item on the *libreta* is also sold *por la libre* and almost everyone shops in the parallel markets to supplement their diet where, indeed, the prices are higher. But Cubans spend so little on rent (a maximum 10 percent of income), medicine, education, transportation, clothing, that paying extra for a better diet is not really a hardship. Cubans also eat out a great deal.

There is also no mention of the fact that almost every Cuban eats lunch on the job or in the school, which is not "counted" when considering the diet according to the ration book. One can buy as many cigarettes as he or she wants, there is no limit. Cigarettes on the ration book cost 20¢; *por la libre*, $1.60 — but isn't that a good idea? Mr. Berube says that rationing is unlikely to be scrapped in the near future, but Cuban officials are working now on a plan to phase out the *libreta*, and the word in Havana in August was that *this* time it is going to happen.

The lack of variety in the Cuban diet is, unfortunately, as much our fault as that of the Cubans. Our scandalous twenty-five-year-old economic blockade has made it impossible for Cubans to supplement their diets with U.S. imports and made it necessary to obtain the almighty dollar by exporting some of Cubans' favorites, like coffee and lobster.

Mr. Berube says that "Cubans lack the means to register their opinions. . . ." In the last two years there has been a radical change in this area: all newspapers and magazines now carry letters to the editor, letters which have resulted in investigative reporting into corruption, bad planning, poor housing construction, poor services. The monthly *Opina* regularly publishes strongly critical articles on every aspect of daily life, from food to television. TV programs voice loud criticisms — from "man-in-the-street" interviews to serials and soap operas which

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reflect an often harsh reality. The new housing law which went into effect in January was the result of many years of complaint about inadequate housing — as a result of the new law, people may own their own homes, buy and sell, build onto their houses, etc.

We in the U.S. often describe such changes as "capitalistic" or "more" democratic. What the Cubans say they are doing is building a "socialist democracy." The revolution is *still* only twenty-seven years old; when *our* "revolution" was 127 years old, we women still didn't have the vote; we had no free health care and no free education system.

SANDRA LEVINSON
Center for Cuban Studies

The author replies:

It is extremely risky business writing about Cuba from an independent frame of reference. One risks alienating *both* the political left and right.

For Ms. Blanco, perhaps I was not strong enough in my condemnation of the Castro regime. However, my purpose was not to add another political critique, but to look at social policy in Cuba according to independent scholars.

Mr. Lamanna underscores a dilemma in comparative educational research. Since the United States' educational system is unique in its openness, it is difficult to compare our system to meritocratic systems that are selective. This is true not only of comparisons with Communist countries, but with the selective Japanese and Western European systems as the "excellence" reports on education by the national commissions in recent years attest. Nevertheless, Cuban and U.S. illiterates are from similar low-income populations.

Finally, Ms. Levinson, perhaps, has more firsthand knowledge of the Cuban system since the Revolution than any other American citizen. However, may I point out that my reading of the five-year study of food policy in Cuba entitled "No Free Lunch" was regarded by the chief author, Medea Benjamin, in a letter to me as "a good job in capturing the tone and flavor of our work." Parenthetically, the Center for Cuban Studies provides useful information about Cuban life.

MAURICE R. BERUBE

A satisfying mixture

Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Editors: Robert Jones's review of *Hotel du Lac* [September 20] was little short of vitriolic. According to Mr. Jones, Edith Hope, the heroine of Anita Brookner's novel, is "the stereotypical English spinster." This is exactly what she isn't.

Stereotypical English spinsters never indulge in sexual liaisons, as Edith does. Having started from this premise it is not surprising that Mr. Jones's conclusions are equally skewed.

The book is not about love, Mr. Jones tells us, but the compulsion to be respectable. Nonsense. Edith chooses to jilt her fiancé on their wedding day because she doesn't love him rather than settle for a life of seemingly wedded respectability.

Miss Brookner's novel rings true simply because it shows reality for what it is — a mixture of ambivalence and ambiguity. Edith Hope, despite her name, does not expect a happy ending. She is prepared to soldier on, a bleak future which no heroine of a romance novel is ever called upon to face.

JOAN M. COOPER

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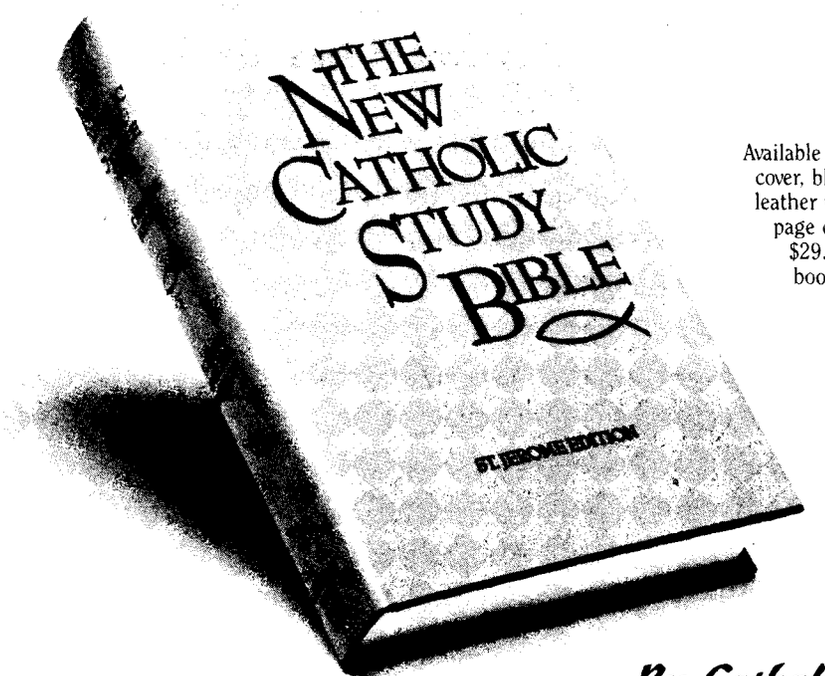

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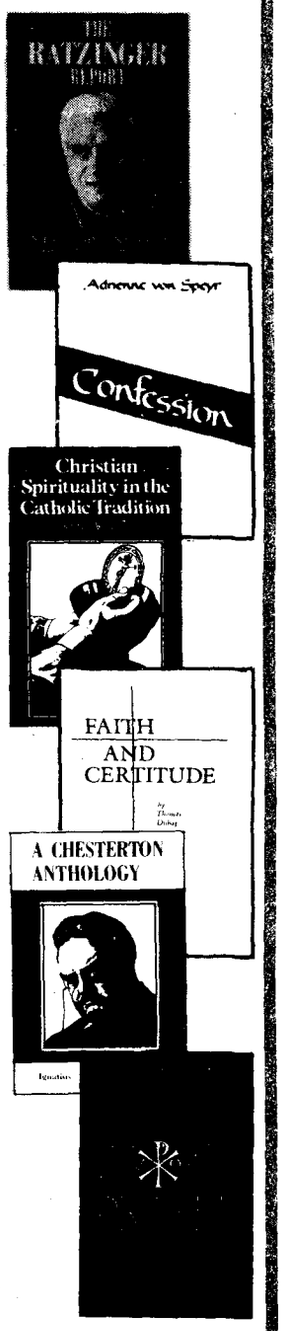

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